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"Altogether such a one as thyself": Art and Religion in Robert Browning's Dramatic Monologues

Abstract: The present paper offers a comparative analysis of Robert Browning's poems "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Caliban upon Setebos," wherein the main point of interest is the interplay between religion and art. I will investigate how religion is depicted and how it influences the artistic viewpoints espoused by the eponymous characters, emphasizing the role these two concepts play in shaping the speakers' self-presentation and sense of identity. In the case of "Caliban upon Setebos," I will also delve into Browning's source of inspiration, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, so as to understand how Browning's own character can be likened to, or contrasted with, the Renaissance playwright's. Whereas Lippi the monk justifies his own penchant for naturalistic art through religion, Caliban takes to more rudimentary forms of art to assuage the fury of an unjust and wrathful deity. However, what seems to drive their definitions and redefinitions of artistic and religious discourse is an apparent lack of agency, which spurs them into rebelling against the limitations set upon them by external forces.

Keywords: dramatic monologue, Shakespeare, religion, colonialism, intertextuality

Introduction

Warwick Slinn interprets Browning's dramatic monologues as a concerted effort in producing "ordered movement and progress" in a narrative sense, justifying "secular rightness or spiritual righteousness," as is the case of "Fra Lippo Lippi" (Slinn, *The Discourse of Self in Victorian Poetry* 62). In another book, the author describes Lippi as an "energetic, dynamic personality" detailing his "playful roguery, chasing after sportive ladies, to the proposed activity of making amends through a new religious picture" (*Browning and the Fictions of Identity* 101). But this is not done haphazardly; rather, the end goal appears to be the cohesive "structuring of experience" so as to justify his own actions, under the guise of a "pattern of sin and redemption" (101). By thus framing his religious and artistic credo, he allows certain clashing dualities to co-exist, the "contentions of flesh and spirit, painter and monk, individual and society" (102). Valentine Cunningham mentions Walter Bagehot's criticism of Browning as a writer of the "grotesque," a "jagged, ugly, useless shape" embodied in a far too realistic poetics; Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos," according to Cunningham, is "not only difficult, but unpleasant" (100). He places his characters "in some way or other on the edge, on the fringe," and his texts are repositories of "failures, dropouts, flouters of convention of every sort, errant thinkers and poets and artists" (206). These are Browning's men and women, dissonant figures acting upon each-other's worlds. My paper aims to discuss these assumptions, investigating the variegated characterization that suffuses his dramatic monologues. It is exactly their positioning "on the fringe" that allows Browning's characters to articulate their *Weltanschaaung* as social rebels. Through the mechanisms of comparative close reading, drawing on author criticism, theory of Victorian poetry in general and the dramatic monologue more specifically, as well as notions of identity and alterity through a postcolonial lens, my research shows that both Caliban and Lippi go beyond the sphere of unpleasant poetics of unbearable realism.

"Fra Lippo Lippi": Ribaldry and Faith

Fra Lippo Lippi is the "boy from the social margin, a street urchin, raised on *Abfall*, the thrown-out edges of food," a transgressor celebrating his own subversive powers (206) (emphasis original). Cunningham quotes George Eliot, who, writing on Browning's poem, envisions the painter as a "big strong uncouth workman out on the booze, with lingo to match" (105). This provides a clear picture of the lines set out by Browning, describing the irreverent artist. The monk expatiates upon his own rough start in life, the way he had to subsist on "fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks, / Refuse and rubbish" (Browning 630), his admission to the ranks of the clergy through the "good fat father" whose promise for a better existence seemed more appropriate than starving on frosty days. His new role forbade "the world, its pride and greed, / Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house" which to a budding novice are equal to "Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici / Have given their hearts to" (631). Such is the subtle mark of irony: the substantial riches belonging to the Medici are filth to a man whose mind and heart open themselves to the reception of the greater gifts of divine inspiration, even though Lippi's likings tend more towards "the good bellyful / The warm serge and the rope that goes all round, / And day-long blessed idleness beside" (631). What follows is the tale of how the monk gained his artistic proclivities: "the soul and sense of him grow sharp alike" (631): his first years of life spent in careful attention towards those who granted him help or mercy—the expressions on their faces and the way they behaved towards him. The priests' efforts to tutor him are in vain: Lippi, a vernacular poet-artist, knows but the 'amo' of Latin, the first-person singular, present tense expression of love. He is a "beast" whose carnal interests ostensibly preclude spiritual leanings. According to George Eliot, "he pours forth the story of his life and his art with the racy conversational vigor of a brawny genius", caught reveling "under the influence of the Care-dispeller" (35), of wine and surfeit and carnality.

Lippi sees his new occupation as a breath of fresh air, a welcome alternative to the incessant learning of Latin. He pours himself with vivid artistic fervor, drawing inspiration from innumerable sources:

> Good old gossips waiting to confess
> Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends
> To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
> Fresh from his murder. (Browning 631)

He uses his surroundings ruthlessly, absorbing all manners of details which he may later use in the creation of his art, and in so doing, he is heedful of the minute details which grant a kind of realism to his works: "Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog! / That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes / To care about his asthma: it's the life!" (632) According to Harold Bloom, "[Lippi] stands at the beginning of a new moment in art" whose opposition to dry, uninspired, unrealistic and lifeless painting can be seen to "amount to a critique of style" (31). "The more realistic the body, the clearer the soul becomes" (32) is Bloom's way of saying it. Stefan Hawlin writes that Lippi's "defence of naturalism" is to be compared and contrasted to Browning's own view of art "which only makes its way towards high ideals by letting in the complexity, resistance, ugliness and evil of real experience" (178) whilst bringing to the fore the British nineteenth century dilemma surrounding Renaissance art (179-181) and its aesthetic and moral entailments. David Shaw regards Lippi's decision to move on from the subject of his own lustfulness towards discussing more refined things, such as art and religion, as an act of progressive maturity, closely tied to the structure of the dramatic monologue, and which manifests itself as a "voracious appetite for new experience" (156). Lippi's volition is part of a "devil's-game" and his choice to "pay homage to the perishable clay" (Browning 632), an act of open dissidence against oppressive and outmoded art. Lippi speaks for the Prior when he begins his discourse on the superiority of soul over matter, and the mocking tone he employs ("It's ... well, what matters talking, it's the soul!") contains within it his own lack of

outward agency, which may only find sublimated freedom in art. He pleads desperately for beauty and detail ("Now, is this sense, I ask?") and twists his language in overpowering irony:

> Thus, yellow does for white
> When what you put for yellow's simply black,
> And any sort of meaning looks intense
> When all beside itself means and looks naught. (632)

He calls for a more expressive and colorful art, richer and more human, an art which can hold flesh and spirit, detail and hermeneutic value.

What is relevant to Lippi's theology is his statement that there has not been, at least as far as he is aware, beauty without soul. He follows this by putting into words the radical belief of the superiority of beauty over spirituality—it is, as he says, "about the best thing God invents" (633). We may posit that beauty encompasses more than lustful drives, going beyond his mere night-time excursions which make him abandon his otherwise dull pursuits, and that it is centered on faithfulness to the world as it is, be it embodied in gossiping old women and freshly slain victims or represented by the vivid kindness of another human being ("[she] said a word, dropped in a loaf, / Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers") (632) . The monk "disemburdens" (632) his creativity by latching onto these scenes of mere existence and transforming them into pictures. He does so, and by this act, he safeguards his creative agency: "I'm my own master, paint now as I please" (633). Furthermore, there is a strengthening and renewal of one's own soul in the simple appreciation of beauty; interestingly enough, James Richardson opines that "despite his protestations to the contrary, Lippi, like the pseudo-Prometheans, worries that he may be sucked into the vortex of the fleshly particular" (39) which absorption might engender the loss of the painter's self-identity. He stresses Lippi's fear and rebellion, which are reactive elements toward a culture that does not grant him full and free expression. However, it is this very same vehement opposition to prescribed norms which allows Lippi to delineate his own worldview and shape his own artistic vision. There is some word-play which suggests this: "You keep your mistr ... manners, and I'll stick to mine!" (Browning 633) Shaw sees this as a simple Freudian slip spat out by Lippi in order to amuse his captors (158), but it is worth more as an artistic statement: he invites the slew of old-fashioned clerics to keep their old ways, whilst securing his own expressive freedom. One might be tempted to interpret this through the lens of erotic release, as this poem is perpetually suffused by sexual undertones, beastly in nature, but essential towards his self-development.

Lippi's contorted and convoluted syntax brings forth pent-up frustrations; he points fingers towards an uncertain 'you,' and his lines drip with condemning irony, less didactic and more vituperative for its own sake. Once his anger is expressed, Lippi focuses his language in clear and flowing confession: he speaks as he was taught, but his confessed philosophy was not transmitted to him by the monks whom he grew up with, but by life itself, the product of an existence mired in stark poverty and desperation. His sight thus purified by harsh conditions, he can always "see the garden and God there" whose essential teaching, never to be effaced or undone, is to never forget "the value and significance of flesh" (Browning 634). This value, a hermeneutic strength which is both inalienable and impossible to overlook, lies at the root of Lippi's religion. The substantive and tangible proof of religion is painted reality. Isobel Armstrong problematizes the aftermath of the creative act, pointing out that it is both transformative, in that it transmutes difficult emotional and physical states into objective constructs, and ambiguous, because subversive and circular (292). I partly agree with Armstrong: if it is transformative, and it truly acts as a thorough means of 'disburdening' oneself, then it is merely partly effective. The sense of rebellion is evident in the lines quoted above. It is without the shadow of a doubt not fully purged—there is no absolute catharsis to be found in painting, even though a sense of personal satisfaction finds overt manifestation in Lippi's monologue.

The influence of religion on Lippi's life is manifold. For one, it acts as a catalyst for his drive to escape the limited and narrow confines to which he was assigned. This is the religion which we might associate with the Prior and his purely 'spiritual' *Weltanschauung,* which Lippi rejects. On the other hand, there is Lippi's own idea of Christianity, which we can imagine as a blank canvas upon which he daubs his eclectic marks: voluptuous yet holy, blasphemous and reverent at the same time, a religion with God at its base and God's creatures, minutely and painstakingly overlaid, at the forefront. It is not a selfless and self-sacrificing religion, as the previous paragraph has proven—it includes the creative 'I' as a brother-figure to God, whom not even Saint John can ape. Furthermore, it is my contention that Lippi's credo is by no means fully subservient to the ideal of self-development, as critics such as David Shaw have stated. But neither is it a system of carefully collected rationalizations, whose purpose we might consider to be the effacement of one's personal sins and misdemeanors, in Lippi's case, unfulfilled sexual urges. We must seek a balance in the middle, in the rough lines and misspoken pleas, rhetorical efforts and the hermeneutic 'meat and drink' obtained upon interpreting Lippi as an imperfect artist articulating his own *ars poetica*.

"Caliban upon Setebos": A Savage Darkly Musing

An anonymous reviewer of Browning's remarked that the opening line of the poem, taken from Psalms 50:21, could be seen as self-referencing, which is to say, one could claim that it points towards Browning and his own talents: "altogether such a one as thyself," enforcing a double identity within and above the text ("Revie of Caliban" 236). Although this is an interesting perspective, it would be best to take the quote as an integral part of the text, especially given the structure of the following stanza, in which we are presented with a kind of bird's-eye view of the monologue's central figure. A rather telling aspect is the use of the third person, which would trick the reader into believing that there is an omniscient narrator setting up the stage for the soliloquizing about to unfold. Inspecting the poem's Shakespearean origins, we find that Shakespeare's Caliban formulates his utterances much like the rest of his characters, providing a direct mirror into his mind and motivation ("This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou takest from me," Shakespeare 1.2.332-333). By revealing himself heterodiegetically, Browning's Caliban mediates his own life, becoming a narrator of his own religious experience. In so doing, he creates his own theology much in the way Lippi does.

The first impression which we gain of him is that of a child, or a savage, partaking of nature's more simple delights. He "feels about his spine small eft-things course" and waits for "fruit to snap at, catch and crunch," (Browning 726) just as Lippi escapes at night to meet unfulfilled desires and to undermine the strict life a monk is granted to bear. Caliban, however, with no audience of guards to proffer hasty explanations to, turns to his own person for conversation. He finds himself free to shake off his vexation by vexing others—be they Prosper(o) and Miranda, figures of human agency which are conveniently set aside in Browning's text, or an Other—Caliban's God, Setebos.

Shakespeare's Caliban evinces much of the same proclivity to vituperative outbursts. The object of his frustrations is Prospero, however, on whom Caliban wishes "infections that the sun sucks up / From bogs, fens, flats," Shakespeare 2.2.1-2). This remark, seen in the light of Prospero's efforts to teach Caliban how "To name the bigger light, and how the less, / That burn by day and night" (1.2.336-337) would lead one to disbelieve critic Mark Van Doren, who attributed Caliban's ferocity to Prospero. He writes that the Duke has failed "either because Caliban was incapable of becoming man or because there is no art, Prospero's or Shakespeare's, by which the inhuman can be made human" (Van Doren 142). The lack of humanity made visible in Caliban could lead to his association with nature and his vast knowledge of the intricate world which he inhabits. Yet Caliban admits to his former love of Prospero, whom he "show'd [...] all the qualities o' the isle, / The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile" (Shakespeare 1.2.338-339). Therefore, it is my opinion that Shakespeare's Caliban is not inhuman—he is merely wild and frenzied by his subservience to Prospero, whom he considers a limiting and damaging force. Northrop Frye contrasts

Caliban's nature with that of Antonio and Sebastian, noting that it "manifests itself more as an instinctive propensity to evil" (189) which is another way of saying that although he may be exposed to human values, he can only be that which it is, wild and vicious. What is meant by humanity in both of these sources is learned or acquired humanity, which Caliban forcefully forswears, constantly seeking to topple Prospero and regain authority over the isle which he claims is his birthright. Shakespeare's creature is implicitly aware of his past, and tries to manipulate his circumstances so as to restore a long-lost status quo. The menacing presence of Prospero is conspicuously absent in Browning, whereas Shakespeare's patriarch shapes the narrative in fundamental ways: he wields power, both as sorcerer and chieftain of the isle. Brinda Charry brings up Curt Breight's interpretation of *The Tempest*, which focuses on the linguistic aspects of power: in this sense, Prospero "evokes the language of treason" against the subaltern Caliban, who, with his "story of treason and usurpation of the island," proffers his own counter discourse. But Caliban is briefly allowed to exercise his identity, before it is strategically taken away from him by Prospero (Charry 65). His agency is temporary, a plaything for more skilled players: Prospero plots out Caliban's usefulness, withdrawing and increasing the native's acting power as it fits his machinations. Continuing the analysis of power structures in the play, Patricia Seed looks into the complex interplay between Caliban, Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, arguing that Prospero uses Caliban's potential rape of Miranda as a means to gain control over the island. The monstrous figure, "the always potentially violent and therefore treacherous native," (Seed 211) is a scapegoat and a political tool, both as slave and as the colonized Other. Caliban's agency is temporary, fitful; it is never self-sufficient as he is never self-reliant. He exists as a disenfranchised symbol of ineffaceable alterity. Shakespeare offers a much richer cast of characters through which he explores social inequality, Caliban being just one of many. Donna Hamilton's contrastive view of Ariel, with his "formally obsequious behavior," and Caliban, quite like "the displanted native of Virginia or Ireland," positions both of them in the nexus of "service and supply, restraint and complaint," a chain wherein personal freedom could be obtained or taken away (Hamilton 53-54). Dainty, submissive Ariel and monstrous, spiteful Caliban are subjects of symbolic oppression and not agents in their own right, directed by Prospero's whims. The playing field of obedience and rebellion is mapped onto structures dictated by the exiled sorcerer, who acts as a fulcrum around which lower entities revolve. The cultural sway these characters effected upon British culture is discussed by Octave Mannoni, who points out that the eighteenth century showed a penchant for heroes both "sentimentalist" and "misanthropist," as with Robinson Crusoe, but that "the seeds" of this tendency "had been planted much earlier," giving rise to a schizophrenic dual image, of "monstrous and terrifying creatures," not unlike Caliban, and "gracious beings bereft of will and purpose," embodied by Ariel (104). Browning later developed and reworked Caliban's image, doing away with extraneous characters so as to grant ultimate rhetorical power to the speaker of the dramatic monologue, the misanthropist (anti)hero musing on an unjust god, the patriarch at hand in lieu of a scheming magician. Prospero fades; Setebos, in his dark and wrathful divinity, is the hated object against which the native struggles in order to establish selfhood.

Returning to Browning's text, one of the first differences we notice is the displaced focus of rage. With Prospero a mere mental figment, easily discarded, Browning's Caliban names the source of his hatred: "Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!" We can posit that one reason for his hatred towards this god is his purported distance—"Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon" (726)—which gives rise to the deceiving assumption that they, the monster and the god, are in the end different creatures. His early rhetorical efforts center on limiting or otherwise deconstructing Setebos's authority, who may hold dominion over the isle, being its creator, and over "clouds, winds, meteors, such as that," but not over the stars, whose origins Caliban initially withholds.

Further on, he theorizes that the world was born through discomfort and divine self-insufficiency. Unable to bear his own existence, Setebos strives to create an ideal world. His subsequent failure results in a return to a previous state of existence which he despises; like a freshwater fish to whom the warmth

of the sea stands for "bliss she was not born to breathe" (Browning 726), so does Setebos hate the barren world within which his power is sufficient. This leads to a strengthened disdain towards that which is not attainable. Both in Shakespeare's text and Browning's we are shown a Caliban bereft of agency, but the strategies the two Calibans resort to differ. The key to this lies in the nature of the genre in which the two works were structured. Shakespeare's Caliban directs his efforts towards an external target, namely the drunkards Trinculo and Stephano, in whom he lays hope for the murder of his master, Prospero. He is able to act, and by this he ensures a narrative impetus which finds finality in his submissive return to Prospero's side. There is no such outward movement in Browning's monologue; the only interaction possible is manifested through mental play, an explicit and internal urge to compare and contrast his mortal finitude to the boundlessness of a divine figure which must, at all costs, be attacked. In enumerating and separating the realms over which Setebos holds dominion, he imposes limits on the god's power while granting himself a power of his own, purely of the intellectual or theoretical sort, the roots of which are to be found in his intimate knowledge of both the arcane wilderness surrounding him and of the god who shaped that world.

Moreover, his creative gift misspent, Setebos cannot form a second deity which mirrors the original's traits. He is forced to give birth to beings which are "Weaker in most points, stronger in a few, / Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while" (Browning 727). This divine effort which manifests itself through creatures paradoxically better yet inferior to Setebos provides a direct pathway into Caliban's psychology and the conditions which lead to his redefinition and rearrangement of cosmogonal principles. It points towards his murky, darkened mind which reels in impotence from an environment he cannot fully control. He is, so to speak, twined around the lowest links in a spiteful pagan chain of being which he attempts to shatter by reasoning away his own position. Discussing Browning's choice of subject, Robert Bell opines that Caliban's philosophizing is "exceedingly repulsive," going so far as to claim that it is "almost unfit for separate artistic treatment" (243). I disagree with this statement, and with his thought that Caliban's meditation is nothing but "ugliness so extreme as to fill the gazer with instinctive detestation and loathing." (243) Bell's opinion abounds in critiques of "Caliban upon Setebos," yet it merits revision. Caliban's intentions differ only at a superficial level from those of Lippi: they both share frustrations which arise from a sense of limitation and creative rigidity. Whereas Lippi vents his emotions through radical art and nightly excursions, Caliban theorizes in order to bring on a perception of divinity which is close to his own heart.

The god's relation to the "mere playthings" subordinated to him is linked to Caliban's drunken bouts and his ceaseless ruminations. He concocts a rudimentary form of alcohol the effects of which he likens to the creeping flashes of "maggots scamper[ing] through [his] brain" (Browning 727)—this imagery points to the very earthen, mud-bound plane which Caliban stands for, a singular figure, animal in instinct yet undeniably human. This contradicts John Howard's insistence that the positive, humane qualities present in Shakespeare's Caliban are completely missing in Browning's (Howard 226). Far from having lost the "redeeming qualities which Shakespeare gave to his monster," (226) the monologue-Caliban shows a much more developed humanity. He evinces a consistent mode of thought, constructed by means of analogies and comparisons, a more rational character than Shakespeare's.

Led away from reality through inebriation, Caliban projects a vision of himself as a bird. Like the fish which cannot bear to live out its days in the sea, or like Setebos whose incapacity to create a second deity forces him to turn on lesser life-forms for his own cruel sport, he finds that he cannot transcend his nature. Instead, he imagines the creation of a bird-Caliban which "hath wings, / And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire, / And there, a sting to do his foes offence" (Browning 727). With a certain measure of self-obsession, Caliban would insinuate himself into the bird's existence and manipulate it according to his desire, chancing the life or death of the creature upon whatever whims would visit him. He would act in such a way driven by the transitory and frail nature of life under the autocracy of an unpredictable master.

If Caliban chooses to kill or let live, create or destroy, if he insists upon "Making and marring clay at will," then "So he," Setebos, the shaper of the isle, creator of "clouds, winds, meteors" (Browning 727), the menacing figure more demonic Demiurge than benevolent God.

At this point it may be helpful to return to an analysis of symbols. We can find the idea of self-representative art in both "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Caliban upon Setebos," and one of the ways in which the two dramatic monologues are similar is in the overt use of art as self-commemoration. First of all, both characters face the threat of erasure, to one extent or another. Lippi has before him the loss of his *elan vital*, his highly personal vision of art and religion which cannot thrive under the decree that he should "Paint the soul [and] never mind the legs and arms" (Browning 632). Caliban, contrary to the popular opinion, is human. Yet his humanity is base, uncouth, lacking the education given to the Renaissance monk by his superiors. As such, there is no strong faith in art and its subtleties on his side, but it would nevertheless be wrong to state that there is no danger that could arise from his unrestrained blasphemies. Quite the contrary: whereas Lippi's doom could be a metaphoric death, a death of the spirit, Caliban risks physical destruction at the hands of an angry god.

Secondly, both monk and savage take to art to alleviate their insufficiencies. Lippi adopts pictorial realism as a result of his rough upbringing, but also to spite his narrow-minded superiors, whose wooden spirituality he carves into a fresher, fuller shape. His creative Trinity is fleshed out in his plan to "take breath and try to add life's flash, / And then add soul and heighten them three-fold" (632), which implicitly holds that the breath—or the soul, etymologically speaking—as the single element, origin and end-point of religious art can be but a crippled outshoot of a more naturalistic art. There is a less marked notion of artistic necessity in Caliban's verbal torrents, and it is always projected, theoretical. His dream of the clay-bird is similarly an artistic symbol, and his need for self-expression—his willingness to create, along with the nature of the ensuing creation—is a sign of creativity, no matter how stunted.

Thirdly, once we take a closer look at what these creative acts entail, it becomes immediately noticeable that objective art is more or less disregarded for one which contains and enmeshes the creator, either overtly or in a subtle manner. Lippi's is one of the latter, or at least it would appear so. He envisions a painting bright and angelic, with "God in the midst" in a harmony of divine luminescence. Yet there, "Out of a corner when you least expect, / As one by a dark stair into a great light," sneaks in the monk, who has climbed beyond the "dark stair" of mortal suffering into the "great light" which suffuses both divinity and the painting depicting it (635). His being addressed by an angel seems to reflect a need for validation which would offset years of repressed artistic ennui; in any case, he would reach objectification, being inscribed into a narrative which would honor God and man alike, the First Cause[1] and the particularized representative of humankind. Caliban's endeavors are somewhat more complex and difficult to decipher. It is ambiguous whether he refers to the new being as 'Caliban' as an indication that he is projecting himself into the winged clump of clay or merely shedding unwitting light upon his own vocabulary, in which Caliban simply signifies 'creature.' That he would turn upon the object he has made and inflict harm upon it as he pleases implies both the aftermath of a deeply-seated trauma, understandable given his descriptions of Setebos, and the need to impress a lasting spiritual mark by which he may be remembered.

In light of such an analysis, it avails us to look at some theoretical frameworks elaborated in previous research done on Browning's works. Both poems are dramatic monologues by genre, using common techniques and sharing fundamental similarities, but their reception differed wildly. How is it that we can account for the ways in which these works were received? Reading Alan Sinfield's study on the dramatic monologue, we may recall what he said of judgement: it is indirect and hinges on the way we interpret the monologues, bestowing a reading experience akin to "the impact of a personal encounter" (3-6). This

[1] By 'First Cause' I mean the philosophical term referring to God, the self-created being and the one cause to which every other cause must ultimately come back

is seen in the unabashed confessions garrulously voiced by Lippi and Caliban and the force with which they aim to fulfil their rhetorical purposes. Robert Langbaum's idea concerning the particular angle of vision can also serve our analysis. The defamiliarizing effect of different angles can take themes such as religion and art, and provide eclectic perspectives as those of the aforementioned characters. Langbaum also provides us with the rather convenient dichotomy of sympathy and judgement (131). Lippi, surrounded by an aura of charming yet heroic foolery, leaning slightly towards debauchery but not sufficiently offensive so as to elicit outright judgement, demands our sympathy. Turning to Caliban, we discover a cruder nature. His is a "clown's conception," according to Browning himself (Howard 226), and critic John Howard is of the opinion that Caliban's nature "represents something early and undeveloped, something which is far back in the evolutionary scale," a quintessential part of the chthonic world which he regards as home (227). From Caliban's perspective, art and religion are conduits through which power can be established and disestablished. He envisions a cosmogony born out of spite, envy and chaos—we cannot fathom a world brought into existence with such forces as its cornerstones, a world of "decay and primitive survival" (Howard 228). The monologue is a space of expatiation in which intricate power structures are thoroughly dissected, compared and fitted into a fixed hierarchy of authority.

Continuing that line of thought, it becomes immediately relevant that Caliban attempts to revise his theology by superimposing a second deity onto Setebos. He admits that there might be ("something quiet o'er His head, / Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief") which stands in opposition to both Setebos and Caliban. This deity "feels nor joy nor grief", being of remote, celestial origin, removed from the swamp-land of dim and frustrated thought. That Caliban associates this lack of feeling with a lack of weakness is descriptive of his spiritual and psychological state, which is perpetually at war with itself, ceaselessly devising new gods as figures of emotional catharsis. The "Quiet," as he names this god-above-gods, seems to stand for immediate and natural action; it is not trapped in the mire of envious begetting, and it only manifests itself in relation to Setebos, who is described by Caliban as being "many-handed as a cuttle-fish," a simile drawn from the now familiar register of primal, or natural, concerns. Setebos casts his envy heavenwards to "what is quiet and hath happy life" (Browning 728) and, finding no possibility to become part of that elevated realm, resolves to create a shadow-world beneath. Setebos may or may not be a fantasy dreamt up to restore balance to a psyche inured to an impoverished and rickety life; nevertheless, it is more cogent to insist on the implications this reformed theology has on Caliban's mind. It goes to prove that his religious imagination is not a mere cluster of glorified projections, but is rather expansive enough to entertain more pure, distant and rational representations of divinity.

The Quiet can be imagined as a new link in Caliban's chain of being, all the while dislocating the center-point of the beholder/beheld. Whereas Caliban might use Setebos as a mirror for his own behavior, subtly indicating a return to the self in the other, Caliban's contemplating the Quiet leads to the relocation of Setebos, but only for a few moments. In describing Setebos's act of creating Miranda, Prospero and himself, Caliban once again tugs away the reader's/listener's attention towards his own thoughts and concerns. This establishes an ever-shifting focus, an eternal re-direction of one's interest brought into causation by rhetorical play. It is merely one of the instances where the line between Caliban and Setebos is, if not completely effaced, then certainly blurred to the point where one cannot make an assertion as to where one begins or the other ends. A further complication arises in the naming of the blind sea-beast, once again bearing the name of Caliban, who can only create imitations of the things which surround it: its blindness seems to rob it of human emotions, reducing it to utter helplessness and servility. In this vein, Hay reads "Caliban upon Setebos" through Bhabha's theory of mimicry, stating that mimicry illustrates a dual role, in that it "[defines] and [delimits] the role of Caliban in his relationship with Prosper," while it destabilizes the "colonial relationship" at the same time. He is "subject to" as well as "subject within" the complex nexus of colonial power structures (Hay 66); he is also an ambivalent figure, "both human, worthy

of enlightenment [...] and simultaneously non-human, deserving of repression" (Hay 74), a chaotic trickster figure trapped in a dialectic he cannot escape.

Conclusions

Returning to the realm of creative power, there is another element which helps in pinpointing the epistemology of the savage, namely Caliban's song and dance. He signals a recurrence of that original motive, envy, which he can only express through secret night-dances and escapades, allowing him to disburden his muddied psyche while constructing a stable self-image.

> While myself lit a fire, and made a song
> And sung it, "What I hate, be consecrate
> To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
> For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?"
> Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
> Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
> That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
> And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
> Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die. (Browning 731)

These lines do more than bring art back to the fore. They hint at a relationship between art and religion, with the underlying principle of envy acting as a pervasive and pernicious Axis mundi, the sole point of connection between man and divinity. The intent behind Caliban's song is self-abasement with the ultimate goal of self-preservation. 'Poor brother' Lippi's poorly restrained discourse shows much of the same. He tries to convince his captors that he is in the right while being aware of their authority, trying to plead with them, repeatedly attempting to present his own truth by conversing about art and God. Both characters share the need to escape, and the urge to bring themselves into their art constitutes a driving force which might grant them agency. Lippi feigns a sort of shyness, puts on a furtive mien to avoid chastisement; Caliban sings his glib song to avert the fury of a god of whom he cannot demand fairness, consistency or stability.

What is novel about Caliban is that he goes a step further by affixing mortality to his god. He hopes that "some strange day, will either the Quiet catch / And conquer Setebos, or likelier He / Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die" (Browning 731). This obscures the already dim line which separates Caliban from Setebos. One could very well assume that Setebos is slowly assuming Prospero's shape, whom Caliban also despises. Regardless, it is my contention that one of the main characteristics of Caliban's religion is its mercurial nature, its malleable state which finds itself altered with each shift in his psychology. Just as Lippi's religion, it is radical: if Lippi attributes beauty to God, claiming that it is essential to creation, and that it commands more importance than the spirit, he reinterprets Christianity and becomes an outcast. Caliban has no previous religion to rebel against—he rather acts against his social surroundings by conjuring up the image of a seething Setebos through which he can understand and redefine himself. These are the complexities of the link between art and religion present in Robert Browning's dramatic monologues, and throughout this paper I have striven to illustrate the ways in which they influence each-other, both as catalysts for self-definition and as means whereby Caliban and Lippi attempt to differentiate themselves from their social and religious milieux.

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The Struggle of the Black Intellectual with Race and Gender Representation. (W.E.B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon, Aimė Cėsaire, Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou)

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to review theories of racial and gender representation in African American literature by highlighting several black intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou. This endeavor aims to understand the links and differences between black intellectuals' lines of thought, such as those formulated by W.E.B. Du Bois or Franz Fanon, by comparison to or in addition to the contemporary views displayed by Maya Angelou or Alice Walker. The emergence of black intellectuals was highly problematic, rising from the South's fields and finding new economic opportunities in Harlem. After the two World Wars, the young generation of African American intellectuals succeeded to create a new cultural movement inspired from folk traditions simultaneously adapted to urban realities, claiming a new identity and defying old stereotypes. This article brings forward a discussion of the ideas that link the aforementioned intellectuals and could be the starting point for further investigation on the black intellectual history that necessitates a more extensive study than the present paper.

Keywords: race, gender, black intellectual, literature, intersectional feminism, history

Introduction

The 'black intellectual' is a special type of scholar, therefore tracing a short history of American black intelligentsia is especially challenging and rewarding, as it reveals how he/she enriches and completes the missing parts of History with his/her insights on the power relations and how the existing power relations can shape and distort a group while benefiting the other. I define *History* as a socially constructed narrative based on existing evidences written mostly by and about men and which includes certain social categories while excluding others.

At first, these intellectuals had to reject their black world because of the prejudiced society which did not acknowledge their merits and strived to be considered contributors to the European culture and civilization. Later, the black intellectual realized that his/her identity was incomplete without the African elements of culture and developed a 'black aesthetics.'

The whole process of searching and rebuilding the fragmented identity has resulted in ideologies and perspectives that center black culture and life. Theories of gender and racial representation are particularly relevant today because in order to understand and accept differences among people "we find ourselves having to repeat and relearn the same old lessons over and over that our mothers did," as Audre Lorde suggests (117).

The Emergence of Black Intellectuals and the Three Types According to Cornel West

Until the second half of the twentieth century many African-Americans missed opportunities for financial reasons primarily, therefore two kinds of black intellectuals emerged. On the one hand, intellectuals trained in white institutions by liberal scholars, such as W. E. B. Du Bois (the first African-American to earn a PhD from Harvard University in 1895) or John Hope Franklin (historian and civil rights activist who also earned his PhD from Harvard University). And on the other, those who did not attend

formal education institutions such as Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin or Maya Angelou, but were nevertheless awarded honorary degrees and were part of the Harlem Writers Guild, the oldest African-American writers' union.

Towards the end of the 1960s African-American students enrolled predominantly in white educational institutions (Williamson 92); and many intellectuals denounced the lack of major black academic journals and the lack of black community support. However, the existence of influential figures in the communities had great impact on their fellow members of that group, succeeding to convince others to read and write. They were usually teachers, as it is the case with Mrs. Flowers in Maya Angelou's first autobiographical novel, who read something that Maya had never heard before—poetry—, and inspired young Maya to cultivate her passion for reading and writing.

Depending on the sources which nurtured the intellectual tradition, two main streams informing that tradition resulted: the black Christian tradition of preaching, which had a great impact upon the identity, form and content of the African-American liberation theology; and the black musical tradition of performance, both of them "oral, improvisational and histrionic" (West 61). Besides these sources, black intellectuals were acquainted with the Western philosophy of Marx or Foucault. As a consequence, the models of intelligentsia were classified according to Cornel West, in his "Dilemma of the Black Intellectual" (1993), into the following:

First, the bourgeois model of intellectuals based on academic legitimacy, which is particularly problematic, since in the repressive white academic institutions of the last century there was a permanent need to prove the humanity of black people, causing black scholars to develop a defensive attitude. This model has been called the "inescapable model"[2] (West 63) because it sets intellectual limits to African-American academics who can never fit into a world that refuses to acknowledge their merits. Moreover, the African-American bourgeois activists were especially capitalists who criticized Booker T. Washington's accommodationism to white values.

Second, as an aversion towards the first model of intelligentsia which denies agency and social relevance, the first impulse of the black intellectual is to adopt a Marxist model precisely because of the need for social relevance, political commitment and organizational connection. However, this model has been criticized for restricting intellectuals to mere public speakers and rarely rendering them as creative theorists, therefore it becomes a false alternative to the radicalized bourgeois intelligentsia.

West puts forward the third model which renders the black intellectual as a postmodern skeptic, inspired by Michel Foucault's philosophy, already capable of a deep understanding of the relations between knowledge and power, discourse and politics. This model provides intellectuals with a critical attitude towards power relations and a careful use of words, unlike the previous model. Foucault himself represented a new type of intellectual, a post-modern, antibourgeois, interested in the "political economy of truth" (West 65), he denounced the identity captive in institutionalized forms of control and domination. Questions about the power discourses revealed a new type of skepticism, specific to postmodernists.

This model may look like the latest fashion of black intelligentsia, but it is actually a part of the Western civilization, bringing to light the uniqueness of black intellectuals' situation and urging the deconstruction of Euro-American "regimes of truth" (Foucault 132). Martin Luther King Jr. is the most representative figure of this category. At the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in 1967 he delivered a speech called "The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement," which takes on many characteristics of Foucault's methodology, and explains the destructive force of power relations for the black community:

[2] West argues that at present there is a small percentage of black intellectuals in white bourgeois academic institutions, however the next level would require infrastructure that attracts people of any color to contribute to academic activities in a similar manner as black critics and psychologists do nowadays

> The policy makers of the white society have caused the darkness; they create discrimination; they structured slums; and they perpetuate unemployment, ignorance and poverty. It is incontestable and deplorable that Negroes have committed crimes; but they are derivative crimes. They are born of the greater crimes of the white society. When we ask Negroes to abide by the law, let us also demand that the white man abide by law in the ghettos. Day-in and day-out he violates welfare laws to deprives the poor of their meager allotments; he flagrantly violates building codes and regulations; his police make a mockery of law; and he violates laws on equal employment and education and the provisions for civic services. The slums are the handiwork of a vicious system of the white society; Negroes live in them but do not make them any more than a prisoner makes a prison. (4)

The solutions provided by scholars to these models were the creation of networks between intellectuals and the development of postcolonial theory, which examines the trauma of the black man's experience of racism. Frantz Fanon describes the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer as a mutually destructive circle of violence where they define each other.

Reiland Rabaka critically engages in his *Africana Critical Theory* (1972) Du Bois and Fanon's theories and the thought tradition their works developed. The context of the rise of these thought traditions that I intend to analyze is neo-colonialism itself and the twenty-first century capitalism that has created new criticism against Eurocentric values. On the other hand, from a more optimistic perspective it is also the opportunity to deconstruct the old and create new practices but not forgetting 'the wretched of the earth's'—to use one Fanon's terms—combat against colonialism, racism, sexism and religious intolerance.

Cultural Underpinnings of Racial Theories

W. E. B. Du Bois' work is similar to Frantz Fanon's regarding their perspective upon the colonial subject's consciousness, and his philosophy of race and gender, making him a Pan-African, a Marxist and a male feminist. Although his understanding of the concept of race changed over time, Du Bois' idea of race is scientifically based, not on biology, but it rather has political, social, historical and cultural underpinnings.

Du Bois developed a gender sensitive understanding of race one century earlier than the actual feminist movements and considered that capitalism and colonialism deepened class conflicts, therefore class and race are inevitably crossing each other's borders, constantly shaping each other. His theory targets the political economy of race and provides new insights on the relationship between race, gender and economy.

Du Bois' theory of colonialism serves as a critique of capitalism; he defines both systems as oppressive and exploitive and expands his analysis taking into account a critical class theory. From this perspective his works have been considered close to the Western philosophy of Marx, although they could be denominated as non-violent socialist rather than revolutionary Marxist. Capitalism and bourgeois bureaucrats could not be endorsed by African-Americans because they lacked capital. On the other hand, communists advocated equality of rights for workers, when actually they meant only white male workers. Although a member of the Communist Party, Du Bois rejected Eurocentric Marxism and Asio-centric communism, but approved of a socialism applied to the realities of the African-American life.

Not only a critic of capitalism but also of patriarchy, Du Bois considered women had a great potential of social transformation. However, black women experience a different reality because of the triple jeopardy of being female, black and poor, therefore reducing Du Bois to his race theory means not paying attention to his studies which opened the path for later African-American women's liberation activists and theorists. *The Souls of Black Folk* included those of women as well, as shown in works such as "The Black Mother" (1912), "The Burden of Black Womanhood" (1907), "The Damnation of Women" (1920). Recent studies on the relationship between Du Bois and feminism reveal that he actually possessed an idealized

image of black women rather than being *profeminine*[3]. In his article "The Study of the Negro Problems" (1898), he disseminates black men's struggle in society, without mentioning women's problems as well, although he treats them separately in other studies, which suggest that he was reluctant to think of women as intellectual and race leaders, an ideology which characterizes even contemporary black academics.

However, Du Bois encourages the economic independence of women, the necessity of women's control over their reproduction and their protection. Women protection has been interpreted as having two meanings. On the one hand, it is necessary to protect women from the abuses that they have suffered since their arrival in the New World, and on the other it implies their victimization and increases masculine authority.

Racial Theory Revisited. From a Refined Psychological Perspective towards a Modern Black Aesthetics

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1959) was a reminiscent of Du Bois' theory of double consciousness, the metaphor behind the masks suggesting that black people have to wear white masks in order to live under the power structure established by the dominant group. Fanon focuses on the more sensitive aspects of colonialism, especially how trauma deforms the lives of black men and women in colonial conflicts in Africa, France and the Caribbean. As a teenager, born on the island of Martinique in a bourgeois family, he learnt France's history as his own, only to be enlightened later by his teacher Aimé Césaire with the philosophy of negritude. After studying psychiatry in France, during the 1950s when the Algerian war of independence against France erupted, he was in the paradoxical situation of treating at the same time the post-traumatic stress disorder of French soldiers and the trauma of the Algerian victims. He expressed a radical anti-racist humanism by resigning as a psychiatrist and devoted his life to the cause of African freedom from the imperialist France.

The Wretched of the Earth (1962) crowns his mission to depict the degrading and alienating effects of colonialism and to analyze the racist project of the European worldview. From his perspective, language is one of the most important weapons which carry racism in a culture. He exemplifies how in the French language white is associated with purity and black with malevolence, and his decolonization theory is still relevant today for many scholars in the fields of social justice and human rights because of his activism for the respectability of every human being's dignity.

W.E.B. Du Bois was undoubtedly the pillar of Pan-African Marxism and critical theory whose intellectual legacy influenced the theorists of Negritude, Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor in particular. In turn, Césaire influenced his student Fanon who analyzed the consciousness of the traumatized colonized from a psychiatrical perspective.

After the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude was another chapter in the history of the Africans and their diaspora which represented an opportunity to reflect upon the situation of black people in the world. The Negritude theorists were called 'guerilla intellectuals' (Rabaka 112) by R. Rabaka[4] as they fully engaged in the anti-racist, anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist project, that even considers that Negritude was the first modern black aesthetic movement by bringing black art in dialogue with Pan-Africanism. Jean-Paul Sartre was surprisingly the first European interlocutor who proposed Negritude to whites and helped popularize Negritude amongst Marxists and academics.

[3] Farah Jasmine Griffin observes in her 2000 study on "Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection and Beyond" that Du Bois' position as a feminist supporter veiled a masculinist approach especially in his study on Negro problems, none of which mentioning women problems. The article provides further feminist intellectuals' writings on Du Bois and their extended agendas.

[4] Rabaka argues that the theorists of Negritude concentrated their energies in their struggle against racism, capitalism and colonialism through cultural and political movements such as Pan-Africanism, the radicalism of the Harlem Renaissance, Sartre's existentialism and even Breton's surrealism.

Black intellectuals strived to be considered contributors to the European culture and civilization, therefore existing in a contradictory situation, rejected by white academia and in their turn rejecting the black world. However, Césaire returned to the Caribbeans with the original project of rediscovering Caribbean history and culture and to deconstruct the white truth. For the first time a black scholar advocated the beauty of black skin and the decadence of a so-called civilization which is capable of colonizing and traumatizing other non-European cultures. In his "Discourse on Colonialism" (1955) he analyzes the degrading effects this has upon the colonizer as well, which have often been overlooked by theoreticians:

> The fact that the so-called European civilization—"Western" civilization—as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of "reason" or before the bar of "consciousness"; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less likely to deceive. (31)

He shifts the focus from the traumatized colonized towards the powerful colonizer and emphasizes how this dreadful process works to decivilize, to brutalize the colonizer who awakens his violent instincts and his double standards. More than being an advocate for the decolonization of Africa, Césaire was an advocate for the 'decolonization of the mind' and the respectability of justice and human rights regardless of the color of their skin. His theory on the effects of power relations between the colonized and the colonizer is greatly significant nowadays and functions as a rejection of humility and oppression, a struggle against alienation and a search for identity.

Césaire successfully deconstructs the European mythologies regarding Africans: the psychologists and sociologists' theory of 'primitivism,' which rather than being objective used speculations and self-serving generalizations; the historians' chauvinism and their passion to monopolize the glory of their past; and even missionaries who described the scarce morality in African philosophy or their 'exoticism.'

Intersectional Feminism as the Totalizing Theory of Race and Gender Representation

Another myth of the era was the prevalent cult of true womanhood, the idea that society is separated into two separate spheres: the public sphere and the private sphere, the latter being reserved to women for activities of child rearing and care taking which they were 'biologically' programmed to perform. Du Bois disagreed with this perspective, in his 1920 work *Darkwater,* he claimed that the full participation of women in social, economic and political life is essential and it is next to the amelioration of the 'color line problem' and the peace movement.

As mentioned before, Du Bois was the first theoretician who analyzed the intersection of several aspects of black people's lives which have an impact on the labor market as well: race, gender and class. Therefore, he had supported, almost a century earlier, the feminist movement which started in the nineteenth century and broadened its debates in the 1960s and 1980s. In the 1950s the theory of intersectionality was incorporated into the field of psychology by Patricia Hill Collins who studied the effects of the intersectionality between race, gender and class materialized into stereotypes, judgments and biases. The actual term entered the field of feminism in 1989 in Kimberlé Crenshaw's article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" for the University of Chicago Legal Forum who argued that:

> Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. Thus, for feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse to embrace the

> experiences and concerns of Black women, the entire framework that has been used as a basis for translating "women's experience" or "the Black experience" into concrete policy demands must be rethought and recast. (2)

Another notable feminist who not only coined the term 'intersectional feminism', but wrote extended essays on how women's identities and experiences are shaped by aspects such as race, age, sexual orientation and class is Audre Lorde who situates her work within transnational frontiers. She participated in the African-American civil rights and feminist movements. Through her essays, autobiographies and poetry, Lorde tried to reconstruct transnational women history by travelling and researching outside the United States and merging with European, Mexican, Caribbean and African culture.

Lorde tackled the racism within the feminist movement itself and concentrated her debates on differences, especially because of her own definition of herself as "a forty-nine-year-old Black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two, including one boy, and a member of an interracial couple, I usually find myself a part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong." (114)

I consider Audre Lorde's thoughts the pinnacle of the African-American theorization on race and gender representation given the fact that she identifies herself at the intersection of those categories enumerated before, which automatically gives her legitimacy to speak from a broader point of view which takes into account as never before the differences between us and pleads not for 'tolerating' these differences but for 'embracing' them:

> Too often, we pour the energy needed for recognizing and exploring difference into pretending those differences are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all. This results in a voluntary isolation, or false and treacherous connections. Either way, we do not develop tools for using human difference as a springboard for creative change within our lives. We speak not of human difference, but of human deviance. Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness there is what I call a mythical norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows "that is not me."[5] (114)

As historical memory helps people remember events throughout time and avoid repeating the same mistakes as in the past, Lorde pleads for the creation of such a collective memory that makes intelligible black people's experiences. Moreover, what Lorde actually advocates is a 'women united in difference'[6] history made possible by their ability to identify new definitions of power; the old definitions need to be changed as they condemn to repetition. She argues that:

> Certainly, there are very real differences between us of race, age and sex. But it is not these differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences. [...] Ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women's joint power. (115-117)

Some of the most common metaphors in African-American studies are two causes for black women's need to self-define, invisibility and blindness, that characterize the situation of African-American women within

[5] Lorde deconstructs the very term for which she is renowned to have pointed out in her studies: 'sisterhood.' She claims that the pretense for homogeneity within the so-called 'sisterhood' of feminists often ignores the fundamental differences imposed by race, sexual orientation, class and age and that such homogeneity does not exist.

[6] Audre Lorde does not use this particular expression, but the essence of her ideas expresses this concept of unity within difference as exemplified in the excerpt from her 1984 study "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference."

the American society and the majority's inability to understand the importance of difference as a creative force.

One of the fundamental themes of Lorde's prose and poetry is the recreation of the self, of a multiple identity shaped at the crossfire of race, sexual orientation and class. She turned her experiences of marginalization and fragmentation into essays, journals and poetry that are by no means fixed into the traditional frames of each genre but extended and shaped as autobiographical.

Her years spent in Berlin, Germany as a visiting professor as well as in many parts of Europe, Africa and Mexico provided her with a special view on the interaction between women in civil rights organizations and the importance of transforming silence into language and action. The binary relationship between femininity and masculinity is too simplistic for Lorde, each category can be further classifiable into smaller subdivisions which deserve to be acknowledged and addressed, instead of pretending their non-existence.

The African-American women movement greatly benefited from Lorde's contribution, her original perspectives on women's culture and identity determined the twentieth century authors to expand and diversify their characters and even genres, Maya Angelou being a good example from this point of view. Starting with the first autobiography from a series of seven, Maya Angelou deliberately challenged the conventional structure of the autobiographical genre by using techniques specific to fiction such as dialogues and thematic development, although she maintains a chronological succession, a single author and a unique use of the genre. Autobiography became for her a process of scripto-therapy, in which she spoke about the profound effects that childhood trauma had upon her and the displacement from her family when her parents separated the two children, Maya and her brother Bailey.

The 1960s represented the most prolific decade for reprinted African-American autobiography, especially slave narratives, and during the 1970s criticism attempted to create literary histories of black autobiography in America. Maya Angelou's editor, Robert Loomis, made an observation that led to Angelou's decision to accept the challenge of writing autobiography after a long career of writing poetry and television series: "I'm rather glad you decided not to write an autobiography because to write an autobiography, as literature, is the most difficult thing anyone can do" (Cox 1). After accepting the challenge and publishing her first novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), James Baldwin called the book "a beginning of a new era in the minds and hearts of all black men and women" (Cox 7) and critics were amazed by the inner truthfulness that Angelou used to account her life story.

The fundamental themes tackled by Angelou are very similar to those that had previously been engaged in Audre Lorde's studies, especially marginalization, oppression, stereotyping and discrimination with a special interest on women's situation. However, their styles could not be more different. While Lorde decides to directly address the situation of black women in the world through sharp, straightforward calls for acceptance of their differences, Maya Angelou shifts the tonality of her feminist project. Instead of writing an almost naturalistic type of autobiography, she experiments with the limits of the genre and conceives a sensitive, poem-like life story that can be categorized as autobiographical fiction—a mixture of reality-inspired situations creatively contextualized into timelessness. Her novels appeal to the emotional intelligence of her readers, while at the same time addressing the eternal struggles that African-Americans had to suffer in a segregated society. Angelou not only experiments with the autobiographical genre but uses self-irony and a playful language when describing herself as a child, the boundaries between truth and fiction are blurred on purpose by the insertion of long dialogues between characters. Her readers can be of any color and shape because even though her experiences are relatable to any black girl in the South, her message of empowerment has a much wider target—that of a generation.

Angelou is not only an African-American intellectual. Her messages regarding the social equality and the human dignity make her one of the most 'phenomenal women,' as the title of her poem goes,[7] of the twentieth and beginning of twenty-first century.

Conclusions

The study set outs to explore how several theoreticians analyzed race and gender representation while at the same time facing a fraught existence in prejudiced societies. I imagined the process of analysis and redefinition of the African-American identity as a spiral that expands every time another intellectual delivers his/her perspectives. The spiral begins with the nineteenth century marginalized black intellectual who had to dismantle theories of race based on so-called 'scientific' evidence, then the discourse expanded yet with another step towards the twentieth century with a systematic critique of the power relations inside the colonial system which degraded both the colonizer and the colonized.

As we move towards a society that is increasingly diverse regarding religious affiliations, sexual orientations and ethnic backgrounds, it is necessary to recognize and accept differences among people, the intersectional feminist theory calls into attention this particular issue of acceptance that has been a problem for a long time even inside feminist movements. In order to understand intersectional feminists' claims, a short history of race and gender representation that highlights the main stages of black intellectual theory is necessary, in order to understand the links and differences between black intellectuals' claims at the beginning, such as those formulated by W.E.B. Du Bois or Franz Fanon, by comparison to or in addition to the contemporary views displayed by Maya Angelou or Alice Walker. This article brings forward a discussion on the ideas that link the aforementioned intellectuals and could be the starting point for further investigation on the black intellectual history that necessitates a more extensive study than the present article.

Categories until then ignored by theoreticians, by politicians and even by historians have risen and some have begun advocating for the civil rights until the emergence of the unconventional contemporary black intellectual who has learnt her predecessors' lessons and repeats them and retells them in a completely new and inclusive approach.

Postmodern studies recovered the figure of the intellectual in its historical peculiarity, originally 'les intellectuels' dared speaking for universal rather than national values, W.E.B Du Bois was the embodiment of the intellectual as bearer of the universal (as nationless and spokesperson of the whole humanity, not as supporter of uniformity). Fanon and Césaire's studies on African identity, nationalism and Negritude were not purposes in themselves, but critical stages towards universalism, they envisioned a raceless society without erasing the historical experience of racism that unites all colonized people. Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou expanded theories of intersectional feminism and addressed their message towards all races, ages and nations. Nevertheless, the relation between race and intellectual had been a difficult one, given the historical circumstances of African Americans in the United States.

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The 'Divide and Rule' Policy as Revealed in African and South Asian Literature

Abstract: In this paper, my objective is to examine Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *The River Between* (1965), Chinua Achebe's novel *Arrow of God* (1988), and Manohar Malgonkar's novel *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) with the aim of exploring the literary impacts of the 'divide and rule' policy in the context of South Asia and Africa. In both regions, the colonizers shrewdly executed this policy despite the fact that Africa and South Asia are different in terms of geography, culture, and history. The colonizers quickly identified and manipulated the existing differences among the locals and introduced new agents of division which helped them rule by damaging the communal unity. In both regions, the colonizers followed similar principles which suggests that the socio-cultural factors shared some significant features. In this paper, I will explore the aforementioned novels to discover what insight literature gives us into the various factors that helped the colonizers execute this policy in two different geographical and geopolitical contexts.

Keywords: divide and rule, colonization, Africa, South Asia, communal division

Introduction

Establishing colonies and maintaining colonial rule requires effective strategies. The 'divide and rule' policy is one of the most effective strategies that the British colonizers used to consolidate their power in Africa and South Asia. A comparative textual analysis of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *The River Between* (1965), Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1988), and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) reveals some significant common patterns. The colonizers primarily followed four steps. First of all, they were quick to identify and manipulate the existing communal divisions among the local people. Then, they introduced new agents of division in terms of religion and education to further widen the rift among the local people. After that, they created a group of loyal native intermediaries to cement the colonial stronghold. Finally, the colonizers used force to subdue any kind of anti-colonial resistance.

A Pan-African approach of studying colonialism has been there for a long time because of the common struggle of the African people against colonial oppression. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004), Frantz Fanon argues that "African unity" is a term "to which the men and women of Africa were passionately attached and whose operative function was to put incredible pressure on colonialism" (106). However, there should be more cross-continental studies of postcolonial literature because of the manifest importance of such a theme. In *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (2003), Albert Memmi argues that the colonizers portray a distorted image of the colonized because such image "occupies an important place in the dialectics exalting the colonizer and humbling the colonized," because without such a distorted image of the colonized, the "presence and conduct of a colonizer would seem shocking," and because such misrepresentation of the colonized is "economically fruitful" (123). In "Discourse on Colonialism" (2000), famous postcolonial scholar Aimé Césaire argues that the colonial enterprise was nothing but a mechanism of plundering the colonized under the pretext of a humanitarian endeavor (32-33). Therefore, a cross-continental study of postcolonial literature, due to its vast and enriched domain, can function as an extremely powerful critique of colonialism which will take into account its devastating consequences not only in Africa, but also far beyond. In his essay "The Quest for Relevance," (2007) Ngugi wa Thiong'o

discusses the importance of such a study arguing that the colonized people's "search for a liberating perspective" will only be complete if they can see themselves in relation to each other's experience (87). In the Introduction to *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), it is argued that millions of people living today "have their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism," and "literature offers one of the most important ways" in which colonialism's "general influence on the perceptual frameworks of contemporary peoples" is expressed (Ashcroft et al. 1). This is why it is of utmost importance that their shared experiences be studied from a cross-national perspective across different socio-cultural spectrums, and the analysis of literary texts is an extremely powerful means of doing so. Since Africa and South Asia were the biggest colonies of the British Empire where the 'divide and rule' policy was implemented with considerable success, a parallel exploration of their literature seems warranted in order to understand more about such policy.

Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Thiong'o's *The River Between* need no introduction. Both novels are among the most influential postcolonial fictions in English written by African authors and have been much hailed for paving the way for a new generation of African authors to carry on their literary pursuit where the portrayal of colonial experience manifests itself in an Afrocentric perspective. As Achebe's work reveals, "British power has been manifested in the terrible destruction" of Africa, not in the "glory or richness of European culture" (Innes 69). The novel also "spawns a story of exercise of power, the exploration of the nature of power, and its limits which generate fractious conflicts" (Mezu 37). Thiong'o's *The River Between*—his first completed novel—seeks to explore how British colonialism instigated and incited division among the native Africans (Williams 22). In this novel, Thiong'o explores how "the imposition of colonial rule" in Africa was predicated on the conversion of the natives from the "traditions and narratives of their ancestors to the stories of colonial modernity" (Gikandi 49). Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* vividly depicts the disunity among the people in India that ended in the tragic partition. Apart from being "one of the most popular novels written on partition," this novel is also considered to be "one of the best-known texts in the whole canon of Indian-English fiction" (Roy 47). The novel particularly stands out for its "extensive political documentation" of historically important events "right from Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement till the time of the Partition" (Roy 48). The novel captures how religious differences among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in India divided millions of people, influenced India's independence movement, and significantly changed the geopolitical atmosphere of the Indian subcontinent by being a catalyst for the partition.

The 'Divide and Rule' Policy and Current Debates: Africa

The European colonial powers used different strategies to consolidate power in the colonies. Richard Morrock identifies three major strategies "that have been used by the modern colonial powers to maintain control of their far-flung empires" (129). The first strategy involves the "settlement of large numbers of Europeans among the subject people," the second strategy consists of "co-opting the native elite through assimilation or bribery," and the "third strategy is divide and rule, a policy that has played a crucial part in ensuring the stability—indeed, the viability—of nearly every major colonial system" (129). According to Morrock, the 'divide and rule' policy can be defined as the "conscious effort of an imperialist power to create and/or turn to its own advantage the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, tribal, or religious differences within the population of a subjugated colony" (129).

A. J. Christopher's perspective overlaps with Morrock's as he also argues that territorial separation was a part of the colonial scheme to implement the 'divide and rule' policy. According to Christopher, "territorial separation through segregation and partition were widely pursued policies in British colonies with long lasting consequences" (233). Colonial rulers "divided and re-divided populations into discrete groups, on the basis of linguistics, religion, ethnicity, and skin color;" and "adopted a policy of divide and rule allied to territorial separation" (233). The result of this policy was devastating as the division created

by the colonial rulers to facilitate their territorial expansion eventually resulted in the permanent division of the former colonial territories (233).

Colonial boundaries were mostly arbitrary in Africa. The colonizers hardly considered the fact that Africa had never been territorially divided as modern nations states, and that doing so would require paying utmost attention to people's ethnic background. Blanton et al. claim that "the European powers imposed formal territorial boundaries" with "little or no consideration to the actual distribution of indigenous ethno-cultural groups" (473). Jackson and Roseberg agree with them as they claim that "only rarely did a colonial territory reflect the shape and identity of a pre-existing African socio-political boundary" which led to the development of political instability in sub-Saharan Africa (14). Roessler claims that such political instability and ethnic strife in Africa is a "legacy inherited from colonization" (304).

According to Wesseling, Africa mainly appears as an "object of European interest, love of conquest and diplomacy, and ultimately as an object of political partition" (3). In his famous book *Divide and Rule: The Partition of Africa, 1880-1914* (1996), Wesseling points out that the extraction of natural resources was one of the main reasons behind the colonization of Africa. He argues that Nigeria became Britain's "most important colony in West Africa" because the interior of the Niger Delta "was rich in the oil, and the rivers provided easy access to it" (187). Wesseling claims that "the Africa today was, in a political sense, created by the Europeans of that time," and regrets that "the most shocking thing about the carve-up of Africa is perhaps not what was done, but the casual way in which it was done" (5).

The 'Divide and Rule' Policy and Current Debates: South Asia

The 'divide and rule' policy played a significant role in the consolidation of colonial power in South Asia, the region most affected by such policy, according to Morrock (143). Farooqui also argues that "the view that colonial rule in India was based upon the strategy of divide and rule" is "substantially correct" (49). He claims that the implementation of such policy was a deliberate colonial "strategy" to create division among the Indians, and argues that "by the beginning of the twentieth century," communal conflicts increased in India at an alarming rate which was "sufficient to demonstrate the success of the strategy" (49).

Famous Indian politician and former diplomat Shashi Tharoor is one of the most vocal critics of the British colonial rule in South Asia who believes that the Hindu-Muslim division was greatly augmented, if not originally caused, by the British colonial rulers which eventually led to the partition of India 1947. In his much-acclaimed book *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (2017), Tharoor claims that "the sight of Hindu and Muslim soldiers rebelling together in 1857 and fighting side by side" had "alarmed the British who did not take long to conclude that dividing the two groups and putting them against one another was the most effective way to ensure unchallenged continuance of Empire" (101). According to Tharoor, "religious communalism was in large part a colonial construction" because "Indians of all religious communities had long lived intertwined lives" (112-113). Tharoor believes that "large scale conflicts" between Hindus and Muslims "only began under colonial rule," and "many other kinds of social strife were labeled as religious due to the colonialists' assumption that religion was the fundamental division in Indian society" (114).

Tharoor also claims that the British colonial rulers had "a particular talent for creating and exaggerating particularist identities and drawing ethnically-based administrative lines in all their colonies" (102). He believes that "Lord Curzon's decision in 1905 to partition Bengal" was one such attempt to divide South Asia based on ethnicity (117). Sengupta argues that "even before the partition of 1947, the politics of communalism complicated the nationalist dream of freeing the country" because the Hindu-Muslim politics "had begun muddying the course of Indian political advance from 1905 onward in Bengal" (16).

Tharoor argues that the British colonial rulers "helped solidify and perpetuate the iniquities of the caste system" in India by promulgating the theory that "caste hierarchy and discrimination influenced the

workings of Indian society" (104). In this regard, famous anthropologist and scholar B. S. Cohn also believes that the 'divide and rule' policy had administrative implications. He points out that "through the establishment of their legal, revenue, and administrative systems, the British created new economic conditions," which gave rise to a new group of "large landlords" who were mainly from Hindu "Kayastha, Baniya, and Brahman" castes (418-431). Dirks points out that "institutional provenance of caste expanded" because of the "implementation of legal codes that made the provisions of the law applicable on caste lines" (66). According to Dirks, "the curtailment of the freedom of the land market," and "criminalization of certain entire caste groups for local policing purposes" were also parts of the colonial policy to create antagonism among peoples of different castes (66).

Literary Representations of the Execution of the 'Divide and Rule' Policy

In both Africa and South Asia, the colonizers were able to execute the 'divide and rule' policy successfully despite clear geographical and cultural differences between these two regions. The colonizers were able to manipulate the existing division among the locals to their own advantage. Sometimes, they played one group against the other to further divide the people in order to thwart the rise of a collective consensus against the colonial occupation. They created groups of intermediaries from the locals who were loyal to the colonial rulers. Apart from the clever manipulation of division among people, forceful subjugation was another method that the colonizers used to establish their control.

The introduction of Christianity saw significant success in Africa. As African indigenous religions were not free from malpractices and superstitions, Christianity became an escape route for many Africans who embraced it. Even though Christianity did not become popular in South Asia, the introduction of the English language proved to be successful in both regions. Those who wanted a better life and hoped for the favor of the colonial rulers embraced English. In South Asia, the Hindus were more open to English education than the Muslims, which contributed to the downfall of the Muslim community. In Africa, the situation was even worse. As more and more Africans accepted Christianity and the English language, African indigenous religions, languages, and cultures were faced with existential threat. *The River Between*, *Arrow of God* and *A Bend in the Ganges* explore these issues in the context of Africa and South Asia, and capture how the implementation of the 'divide and rule' policy severely damaged communal harmony.

***The River Between*: The 'Divide and Rule' Policy in East Africa**

The River Between is a "study of divisions within Gikuyu society, greatly exacerbated, if not originally caused, by the growing impact of British colonialism" (Williams 22). This novel shows how the colonizers strengthened their foothold and established their authority in East Africa by enhancing the existing division among the people, and also by using force. The introduction of Christianity and English education played a pivotal role in enhancing the division between the people of Kameno and Makuyu. This, however, was a common strategy followed by the colonizers—both British and French—in most of their colonies in Africa. The process of establishing colonial dominance "is conducted through schools and, more importantly, Christian missions" (Williams 24). Mulwafu argues that Christianity paved the way for the colonizers' to "intervene and colonize" (305). According to Aimé Césaire, the colonial project in Africa was entirely based on hypocrisy; and the introduction of Christianity and English education in Africa was a project undertaken neither to preach the glory of God, nor to educate the African people (32).

The River Between shows how Christianity emerged as an existential threat to the indigenous religion and culture in the two ridges. The Christian converts start to disregard the indigenous customs dismissing them as pagan rites. In some cases, many converts even go as far as to actively oppose the practice of some of the traditional rituals in Kameno and Makuyu. Circumcision is an extremely important part of Gikuyu culture as an adolescent initiation ritual; but the Christian converts condemn this practice as

"wrong and sinful" in the eyes of God (25). It is important to note that not only are the converts belittling traditional religious customs, but also glorifying Christianity because it was introduced to the village by the colonizers. This is an example of the internalization of the ideas and values of the colonizers, rather than an example of constructive criticism of a social practice.

Joshua—the leader of the Christian converts in Makuyu—believes that he "realized the ignorance of his people" and "felt the depth of the darkness in which they lived." However, he fails to see through the veil of the colonizers' philanthropic project as he is blinded by his newfound faith in Christianity, and also by his belief that the "white man" is "unerring" (29). Clearly, he associates God's infallibility with the flawlessness of the colonizers as they introduced Christianity to Makuyu. His blind admiration of Christianity, intense loathing for indigenous culture, and complete trust for the colonizers make him and his followers resistant to the novel's protagonist Waiyaki's effort to bring peace between the traditionalists of Kameno and the converts in Makuyu. According to Joshua, "all the tribes customs were bad" and that is why "there could never be a compromise" (84). However, Waiyaki believes that with his knowledge of Christianity and English education, he will be able to "uplift the tribe" so that "in the end the tribe would be strong enough, wise enough, to chase away the settlers and the missionaries" (87). But he is rejected by Joshua because of his loyalty to traditional religion, and mistrusted by the people of his own village because of his education in a missionary school. Moreover, Waiyaki faces hostility from Kabonyi, who represents the council of the elders, and also Kabonyi's son Kamau, who is jealous of Waiyaki's popularity. Such rivalry makes Waiyaki's task even more difficult. As a result, Kameno and Makuyu reach an impasse perpetuating and exacerbating the division between the two ridges giving the Siriana mission an opportunity to take full advantage of the disunity between the two villages.

Joshua is a devout Christian who loathes indigenous religious practices. He becomes nothing but a mimic-man—a person who has completely internalized the ideas and values of the colonizers. In "Of Mimicry and Men," Homi K. Bhaba defines colonial mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (122). According to Bhaba, the colonizer wants to be mimicked by the colonized, but in a way that still manifests an obvious difference between the two of them (122). This is exactly what happens to Joshua. He blindly mimics the colonizers but loses his own identity in the process while still remaining the 'other' in the eyes of his colonial overlords. The omniscient narrator points out that ever since Joshua "took to the new faith, he had remained true to Livingstone and his God" (*The River Between* 84). This statement clearly suggests that in Joshua's psyche, Christianity is the white men's religion; therefore, it is important to remain faithful to the white men as well. In his *Black Skin, White Mask* (2008), Frantz Fanon explains this behavior. Fanon claims that a colonized man "identifies himself with the explorer" or in other words, the colonizer, and considers the colonizer to be the "bringer of civilization" who "carries truth to savages—an all-white truth" (114). Joshua exhibits a similar mentality as he believes that the "white man" will remove "the ills of the land" and teach the people to "walk on the light" (*The River Between* 32).

There is a significant difference between Waiyaki and Joshua. Waiyaki believes that his education in a missionary school will help him understand how colonialism works which will enable him to "chase away the settlers and the missionaries," whereas Joshua believes that the people of the two ridges "should leave their ways and follow the ways of the white man" (*The River Between* 32-87). Livingstone, the educator at Siriana mission, takes advantage of Joshua's blind obedience to the fullest, making him a conduit for spreading colonial ideas and values behind the veil of Christianity, which eventually helps the colonizers take control of the ridges. Joshua becomes the example of a "classic indigenous intermediary" who believes that "in some sense he holds power," but in fact he facilitates the colonizers to exercise their power against his own people (Williams 25). Williams claims that it was normal for the British colonizers to function through native agents, and as they did not naturally exist, they had to be created. One such creation was the idea of tribal chief. In areas where the colonial apparatus only started to penetrate, the

job of a tribal chief was carried out by religious leaders. During the onset of British colonial rule in Kameno and Makuyu, Joshua instantiates "the colonialists' preferred model of leadership" in the two ridges as a religious leader (Williams 26). The omniscient narrator points out that by being wholly possessed by the "white man's power and magic," Joshua has actually made the "white man" more powerful (*The River Between* 29). When he learns that Makuyu will be run by the British colonial administration from Nairobi, and that the villagers have to pay taxes to the British government, he has absolutely no hesitation to accept this decision as he believes that it is his "duty as a Christian to obey the government" (*The River Between* 31).

After the colonizers had established a strong foothold in Africa, they started to use force to displace the Africans from their homeland to make space for the settlers. Their exploitation of Africa was "bloody and ruthless" as they carried out "aggressive military campaigns" to "bring large chunks of territory under their control" (Farooqui 56). They established Government Posts to rule the African people. The colonial administration imposed high taxes on the African peasants which impoverished the local people and crippled Africa's economy. *The River Between* captures this grim reality of colonialism in Africa. At first, the missionaries come with the aim of replacing indigenous religion with Christianity. A church is established in Makuyu, and native agents like Joshua become conduit for the colonizers to infiltrate deep into the Gikuyu society. After that, schools grow up "like mushrooms" as "symbols of people's thirst for the white man's secret magic and power" (*The River Between* 68). Eventually, as the colonial rule takes deep root in Kenya, Kameno and Makuyu become vulnerable. People are forced to move from their places and work for their colonial masters. A Government Post is established near Makuyu, and taxes are imposed on locals. Waiyaki regrets the fact that the colonizers "had penetrated into the heart of the country" spreading their "disruptive" influence (*The River Between* 72). He is deeply concerned about the fact that the settlers are "slowly encroaching on people's land" and corrupting "the ways of the tribe" (*The River Between* 94). It becomes clear like daylight that the Siriana missionaries have been sent to "prepare the way for the settlers" as they are "pouring into the interior in greater and greater number" (*The River Between* 110). As Waiyaki's companion Kinuthia says, "... the men of God came peacefully. They were given a place. Now see what has happened. They have invited their brothers to come and take all the lands. Our country is invaded" (*The River Between* 64). This is how the colonizers gradually establish their authority in Kameno and Makuyu, by establishing schools and churches as means of educational and cultural infiltration, by creating native intermediaries loyal to the colonial establishment, and finally by using force.

***Arrow of God*: The 'Divide and Rule' Policy in West Africa**

The British colonizers adopted similar strategies to colonize West Africa. Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* portrays how the colonizers manipulated the existing conflict between Umuaro and Okperi to infiltrate into the Igbo society, introduced Christianity and the English language to establish cultural and linguistic dominance, and finally used force to take total control of the two villages. The colonial infiltration starts with the arrival of Christian missionaries in the villages—first in Okperi, and then in Umuaro. However, it is only when Christianity infiltrates into Umuaro that its adverse effect on the Igbo society and culture becomes clear. The Christians of the villages—the missionaries, administrators, and even the native converts—come to regard the indigenous culture and religious practices with condescension. Goodcountry, who is a convert and works as a missionary, gives Oduche the incitement to kill the sacred royal python because according to the Bible, Satan took the form of a snake to deceive Adam and Eve. Goodcountry believes that the indigenous tradition is barbaric, and that accepting Christianity is the only way the Igbo people can find a way out of their primitive backward life and enlighten themselves. As a son of Ezeulu, the chief priest of the god Ulu, Oduche's attempt to kill the royal python exacerbates his father's animosity with Ezidemili because he is the chief priest of the god Idemili, the owner of the sacred royal python.

If the missionaries loathe indigenous African people and culture because of religious reasons, the colonial administrative officers do so because according to them, the Africans are mere savages. The district officer Winterbottom believes that the Africans are backward races, great liars, and immature like children (Achebe 355-357). He also believes that the colonial enterprise is nothing but a benevolent project with the aim of making the African people civilized. Another colonial officer Mr. Wade labels indigenous rituals as "disgusting juju" (Achebe 485). Such condescending attitude towards the African culture also spreads among the converts; Oduche and Goodcountry are the manifest examples of that. Moreover, not only does the growing importance of the English language pose a great threat to the native languages, but also helps the colonizers assert their dominance. Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to the missionary school to bring back the colonizers' knowledge to the tribe so that the people can fight back. Unfortunately, his decision backfires as Oduche starts despising the African tradition, influenced by the colonial education. In his book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Thiong'o sheds light on this phenomenon. According to Thiong'o, a language is "both a means of communication and a carrier of culture," and that is why "the domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (13-16). In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon argues that the adoption of the colonizers' language marks "the death and burial" of the "local cultural originality," as the colonized people who adopt the colonizers' language believe that they have elevated above the "jungle status" and have become "whiter" by renouncing their blackness (9). This explains why native converts like Goodcountry and Oduche consider the religion and culture of the colonizers to be superior to the African peoples' religion and culture. The lives of native converts like Goodcountry, John Nwodika, Moses Unachukwu, and James Ikedi change dramatically because of their ability to speak English which earns them positions in the colonial administration like warrant chief, court messenger, steward, and so on. These people work as native intermediaries for the colonizers helping them strengthen their position in Africa.

In order to ensure total administrative control over Africa, the colonizers created a group of Africans loyal to the colonial establishment who were enticed "to convert to Christianity" for "additional benefits" (Nunn 151). Wesseling claims that "Africans played an important role in the running of the colonial system. Without their collaboration, colonial rule would not have been possible" (372). Village chiefs were among the group of people through whom the colonizers extended the ambit of their rule in Africa. The novel reveals how the colonizers altered the social hierarchy and power structure of Africa by inventing village chiefs "where there were none before" (Achebe 355). Even though Winterbottom knows that "the Igbos never developed any kind of central authority" and initially criticizes the colonial administration's policy to appoint the village chief, he eventually finds justification for implementing this policy based on his belief that the Africans are incapable of ruling themselves (Achebe 356). But the idea of appointing the village chief is proved to be disastrous as the chiefs start abusing their power through "bribery, extortion, and false criminal trials" (Ayittey 425). James Ikedi, the former chief of Okperi, imposes illegal taxes on people, establishes "an illegal court and a private prison," and asks the people to call him "His Highness Ikedi the First, Obi of Okperi" in an obscene display of power which he has learned from the colonial administration (Achebe 430). Such incidents prompt Winterbottom to say that when given power, the Africans "turn themselves into little tyrants over their own people. It seems to be a trait in the character of the Negro" (Achebe 430). A fictional character inspired from reality, the British district officer ignores the well-known fact that the colonizers created this problem by inventing tribal chiefs, blames Africans for everything, and justifies the policy of appointing village chiefs as an effective way of indirect ruling. This behavior is explained by Albert Memmi as he mentions that "a colonialist is, after all, only a colonizer who agrees to be a colonizer. By making his position explicit, he seeks to legitimize colonization" (89). This is how by creating loyal native intermediaries, the colonizers altered the social hierarchy and power structure of the Igbo society. As the intermediaries were loyal to the colonizers and hostile to their own people, they

brought about further division and chaos in society helping the colonizers carry out their 'divide and rule' policy.

Forceful subjugation of the Africans was another method that the colonizers adopted in their quest for conquering Africa. In *Arrow of God*, Achebe reveals that the colonizers did not hesitate to use force when they wanted. One of Ezeulu's followers recalls that the British soldiers destroyed Abame for killing a white man, and "the story of what these soldiers did in Abame was still told with fear" (Achebe 347). Innes mentions that it is "the devastating power" of British colonial rule that "has been manifested in the terrible destruction of Abame" (69). Winterbottom gives the disputed land to Okperi because they welcome the missionaries and the government, but Umuaro does not. This is how Winterbottom's intervention leads to further dispute between Umuaro and Okperi. The arrest and incarceration of Ezeulu because of his refusal to obey Winterbottom's order to be a village chief proves that the colonial administration can go to any length to suppress any resistance. Winterbottom says that he "won't have any natives thinking they can treat the administration with contempt" (Achebe 473). Sometimes, "the natives were to be forced to work without pay to keep costs down" (Ayittey 422). Mr. Wright and Winterbottom force the villagers of Umuaro to build the road linking Umuaro to Okperi without any pay. When Obika raises his voice against such injustice, he is mercilessly lashed by Mr. Wright who calls the laborers "black monkeys" and wrathfully says that he will not tolerate disobedience (Achebe 403). Such an abusive attitude towards the African people is downright racist, and forcing them to work without pay is nothing but slavery. The helpless villagers of Umuaro know that "there is no escape from the white man," that fighting the white man is like going after a leopard with bare hands, and that if they do so, "the white man would reply by taking all their leaders to prison at Okperi" (Achebe 405-406). Such atrocity was characteristic of colonial rule in Africa. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon mentions that "iniquities such as forced labor, corporal punishment, unequal wages, and the restriction of political rights" was common for the colonized and oppressed Africans (97). *Arrow of God* sheds light on all these forms of iniquity mentioned by Fanon revealing the grim reality of colonial Africa. Since Okperi welcomes the missionaries and Umuaro resists them, it is the people of Umuaro who are forcefully subjugated by the colonizers. It is the people of Umuaro who are on the receiving end of abusive and unequal treatment by the colonizers while Okperi earns special favor. This is how the colonizers used force to suppress resistance, subjugate people, and create division among different communities.

***A Bend in the Ganges*: The 'Divide and Rule' Policy in South Asia**

In South Asia, the support of native intermediaries was extremely crucial for the British rulers, just like it was in Africa. The intermediaries worked as agents of division among people of different class and religion contributing to the execution of the 'divide and rule' policy. Bose and Jalal claim that the "strong strand of collaboration" between the British rulers and the "Indian intermediate social groups" was among the "critical factors which brought the British success" (57). According to Cohn, most of these intermediaries belonged to a "new landed class" who "acquired wealth through working for the new [colonial] administration" (431). Many of them were awarded titles of honor such as Raisahib and Raibahadur because of their loyalty to the colonial government which made them so servile that they did not support India's movement for independence. When Debi Dayal, the protagonist of the novel, is arrested for his anti-colonial revolutionary activities, his father Tekchand, who "held an honorary commission in the British-Indian army," condemns Debi's anti-colonial activities and denounces him as a "seditionist" (Malgonkar 119). The novel also portrays how Raisahib Tulsidas' son murders Gian Talwar's elder brother due to a family feud, and is not punished because of his connection with the colonial government. Tulsidas is the local landlord who extorts money from the local people to pay revenue to the colonial government. His misuse of power makes the local people believe that the British are more trustworthy than the Indians who abuse their judicial and law enforcement power. Gian expects "complete

fairness" (Malgonkar 55) from an English judge in the court, and his domestic helper Tukaram believes that the British do not take bribe like the Indians. But in reality, the colonial administration has always supported the Sahibs who have returned the favor by working for the British to strengthen their position in India. Gain Talwar's faith in the colonial administration shatters when he fails to receive justice for his brother. As a result, he moves away from the path of Gandhian non-violence, kills Tulsidas' son to take revenge, and eventually supports the Indian nationalist anti-colonial revolutionary movement.

The colonial rulers used the religious differences and conflicts among the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs to their own advantage to execute the British policy which eventually saw the partition of India. Shashi Tharoor mentions that "religion became a useful means of divide and rule," particularly the Hindu-Muslim divide which was "defined, highlighted and fomented by the British as a deliberate strategy" (111). Bimal Prasad points out that "because of their strategic position the British could easily play one community against the other and this they always did" (257). Manohar Malgonkar highlights this issue in *A Bend in the Ganges*. Shafi Usman, the leader of the group of revolutionaries in this novel, identifies religious differences as the main cause of India's subjugation, and regrets that "the British had learned to take the fullest advantage of these differences, playing the Hindus against the Muslims, and the Sikhs against both" (Malgonkar 73). He also regrets that the Congress and the Muslim League have been tricked by the British into exacerbating the religious divide by antagonizing each other. Shafi believes that "the nationalists have just played into their [the British rulers] hands—Gandhi and Jinnah both" (Malgonkar 73).

Shashi Tharoor claims that the 'divide and rule' policy was nothing but a "process of social separation that soon manifested itself as psychological separation and conscious of difference" leading each community to "fear that its self-interest could be jeopardized by the success of others" (111). This explains why Shafi Usman, a purveyor of Hindu-Muslim unity and a strong adherent to secular principles, suddenly starts to mistrust his fellow Muslim revolutionaries, conspires to arrest them, and re-orientates his activity as a revolutionary by joining the Pakistan movement. Shafi, who has always believed that breaking Hindu-Muslim solidarity is nothing but "playing into the hands of the British," eventually falls into the very trap of separatism as he is convinced by Hafiz—another Muslim revolutionary—who claims that the Hindus will make the Muslims their slaves after the British leave India (Malgonkar 91). *A Bend in the Ganges* vividly portrays how the policy created mistrust among the Hindus and the Muslims of South Asia. Such mistrust reinforced the Hindu-Muslim division, and made the implementation of this policy easier.

Using force was a common method for the British rulers to tackle any anti-colonial insurgency. They were particularly ruthless against the revolutionary freedom fighters who opted for violence to put an end to the colonial rule in India. But the revolutionaries were not the only target of colonial violence, as unarmed civilians were also victims. *A Bend in the Ganges* gives the readers a glimpse of how the colonial rulers used force and violence to deal with anti-colonial uprising. For the revolutionaries, "anyone who represented that [British] rule, British or Indian, was their enemy; anything that represented that [British] rule was their legitimate target" (Malgonkar 72). As a result, the British police force was always on the hunt for the revolutionaries, who would receive severe punishments including death sentence and life imprisonment if they were caught. Before Shafi Usman betrays his fellow Hindu revolutionaries and joins the Pakistan movement, he remains the most wanted man in his state, as the British police proclaims "a reward of thousand rupees to anyone giving information leading to his capture dead or alive" (Malgonkar 71). After Debi Dayal is arrested because of his involvement in anti-colonial terrorist activities, he is sentenced to life imprisonment, and is sent to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Ironically, the lack of unity among the Gandhi-led nonviolent protesters and the violent revolutionaries made both groups vulnerable to colonial reprisal. Moreover, the Hindu-Muslim conflict also led to the Congress-Muslim League rift which eventually tarnished the religious solidarity among the revolutionaries. Such divisions only helped the British rulers to single out their opponents and use force to bring them

down. But, as stated above, the attacks were not limited only to the militants, as unarmed civilians were also subjected to brutality.

The notorious Jallianwala Bagh massacre is one of the most heinous acts of mass murder committed by the British rulers. The massacre was "no act of insane frenzy but a conscious, deliberate imposition of colonial will" that took the lives of "at least 379 people" (Tharoor 169-170). *A Bend in the Ganges* gives a glimpse of the trauma caused by the massacre, as it reveals that Shafi Usman's father is killed in the massacre when Shafi is only seven years old: "He had been taken to identify the body of his father, flung obscenely on a heap of other bodies" when the "dead of Jallianwala had already began to smell" (Malgonkar 74-75). This traumatic event inspires Shafi to join the revolutionary movement later. The colonial rulers deliberately used force to intimidate the mass in an attempt to prevent them from uniting against the colonial rule. Since the aim of the 'divide and rule' policy was to prevent people from being united, the colonial rulers did not hesitate to use force to accomplish that goal.

Conclusions: The 'Divide and Rule' Policy and Its Strategic Blueprint

A close examination of these three novels reveals the fact that in spite of the obvious differences between Africa and South Asia, the basic strategies the colonizers used in order to execute the 'divide and rule' policy across these two geographical contexts were quite similar. Their method was simple. At first, they cleverly took advantage of the existing social, cultural, religious, political, and other kinds of divisions among the local people. *The River Between* portrays the division between Makuyu and Kameno, revealing the lack of unity in the Gikuyu society in East Africa; *Arrow of God* highlights the division between Umuaro and Okperi, revealing the lack of unity in the Igbo society in West Africa; and *A Bend in the Ganges* reveals the rift between the Hindus and the Muslims in South Asia. The ideological differences between the adherents to the militant Swadeshi movement and the followers of the Gandhian peaceful non-cooperation movement also receive a special treatment in *A Bend in the Ganges*. The British colonizers were quick to identify and use these differences to their advantage. They played one group against the other which widened the rift between the opposing groups. Both *The River Between* and *Arrow of God* capture how the colonizers favour the villages with the biggest number of Christian converts and exploit the ones where the traditionalists dominate. *A Bend in the Ganges* portrays how the lack of unity among the adherents to the Swadeshi movement and the Gandhian non-cooperation movement allowed the colonial administration to suppress the Swadeshi revolutionaries. The novel also highlights how the Hindu-Muslim tension significantly weakened the revolutionary movement, as mistrust crept in among the revolutionaries of different religions forcing them to go their separate ways. The British colonizers cleverly used the existing differences among the locals in Africa and South Asia as a strategy to execute the 'divide and rule' policy, and all three novels in discussion capture this aspect successfully.

After that, the colonizers exacerbated communal differences and conflicts by introducing new agents of division like Christianity and English education. In East Africa and West Africa, Christianity played a vital role in cementing the position of the British colonial rulers (Williams 24). Both *The River Between* and *Arrow of God* portray how Christianity poses an existential threat to the native African cultures and religions, and how the Christian converts start disregarding indigenous customs. Both novels highlight how the English-educated converts benefit from their ties with the colonial rulers, whereas those who reject Christianity and English education face utmost discrimination. Even though the colonizers claim that they introduced Christianity and English education in Africa for the well-being of the Africans, their actual motive was to establish colonial dominance (Césaire 32). In South Asia, Christianity was not very much accepted due to the strong influence of Hinduism and Islam; however, the introduction of English education worked in favor of the colonial administration. Many critics believe that the primary purpose of introducing English education to India "was to train clerks for government offices, to produce minor functionaries who would fit smoothly and without friction in the intricate administrative machinery of the

British government in India" (Gupta 73). Moreover, "the effect of this limited education available" to a handful of people "was obviously deleterious to the masses" because it "only helped to prepare a group of elites who would be alienated from the rest of the society" (Kamerkar 377). *A Bend in the Ganges* portrays how a class of English-educated people is alienated from the society. Not only do they bow down to the colonial administration, but also oppose India's movement of independence. This is how the British colonizers introduced new agents of division like Christianity and English education to further divide the people in Africa and South Asia, and all three novels in discussion capture this aspect vividly.

After introducing these new agents of division, the British colonizers created a group of native intermediaries who were loyal to the colonial administration. All three novels in discussion capture this phenomenon accurately through the depiction of characters that not only side with the colonizers, but also loathe their own culture and heritage. Moreover, they benefit from their coalition with the colonizers, and many of them actively oppose any resistance against colonial oppression. *The River Between* portrays Joshua's loyalty to the colonial administration. *Arrow of God* depicts characters like Oduche and Goodcountry who are indoctrinated in the colonial dogma to such an extent that they do not shy away from resorting to violence in order to obstruct the observation of native African rituals. Moses Unachukwu achieves high social status because of his English education, and James Ikedi maintains close relationship with the colonial administration for monetary benefit. *A Bend in the Ganges* portrays characters like Gopal, Tulsidas, and Tekchand who are in favor of the British colonial rule in India. Gopal's family has close ties with the colonial administration, Tulsidas is a landlord who collects revenue for the British government, and Tekchand holds an honorary commission in the British-Indian army. All of them benefit from the colonial rule and therefore oppose any kind of anti-colonial movement, may it be it the Swadeshi movement led by the Indian revolutionaries, or the peaceful non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi. By highlighting how the British colonizers used native intermediaries to consolidate colonial dominance, all three novels in discussion reveal a major mechanism at work behind the 'divide and rule' policy.

The final step of establishing total colonial dominance was to use force. The British colonizers used force to establish colonial settlements and to suppress any anti-colonial movement ranging from peaceful protest to armed insurgency. *The River Between* reveals how the British colonizers forcefully evicted the native Africans in East Africa and grabbed their lands. The colonial administration also imposed high taxes on African peasants leaving them economically crippled. The novel also reveals that the colonial administration was ruthless to the native Africans who dared to stand against colonial oppression. Similarly, *Arrow of God* highlights how the British colonizers used brutal force in West Africa to continue their conquest. The destruction of Abame is one of many incidents where entire villages were wiped out by the British soldiers. The attempted killing of the sacred python represents an attack on the native African religious beliefs, and the incarceration of Ezeulu is an example of subduing resistance against the colonial administration. The novel also captures the introduction of forced labor and slavery in West Africa by the British colonial administration. *A Bend in the Ganges* reveals how the British colonizers in South Asia used force to suppress anti-colonial resistance and to silence voices that rose against colonial oppression. The colonial administration was particularly ruthless against the Indian revolutionaries who carried out the Swadeshi movement—an organized armed rebellion against the British Raj. The protagonist Debi Dayal is captured and incarcerated in the notorious Cellular Jail—a historically infamous colonial prison in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The novel also sheds light on the horrors of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre revealing the fact that even a peaceful gathering of people was not safe from the bullets of the British soldiers under the colonial administration. It is patently obvious that the British colonizers used force as a strategy to execute the 'divide and rule' policy in Africa and South Asia, and all three novels in discussion reveal this truth commendably.

Therefore, all three novels paint a clear picture of the existing communal differences among the colonized people, and show how the colonizers took advantage of that. They show how the introduction

of new agents of division threatened the indigenous cultures of Africa and India. The novels also show colonial atrocities by depicting how the colonizers used brutal force to establish their dominance. By highlighting these issues, the novels in discussion reveal the colonial mechanism at work for the execution of the 'divide and rule' policy in both regions. Finally, all the three novels in question portray a clear picture of the devastating impact of the 'divide and rule' policy in their respective context. This is how, despite the contextual differences, the novels are in dialogue with one another in terms of their portrayal and treatment of how such policy was implemented, and its impact on people's lives.

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Sex Toys for Women with Arthritis: From *the Golden Girls* to *Grace and Frankie*

Abstract: The purpose of this work is to perform a comparative analysis of how women's sexuality is displayed in both the American TV show *Grace and Frankie* (2015-present) and *The Golden Girls* (1985-1992) using a post-feminist optic (Genz and Brabon 2018). The post-feminist rhetoric, which surged as a result of the economic boom of the 1990s and 2000s, optimistically embraces consumer freedom, choice and empowerment (Genz and Brabon 2018) and presents women as assertive beings who enjoy their sexual freedom and financial agency. Analyzing two shows that feature senior women as their main characters, whose pilot episodes aired thirty years apart can shed some light on how media have changed the portrayal of senior women and their sexualities. *The Golden Girls* and *Grace and Frankie* share enough features to enable us to trace similarities: the leading characters are all white women, middle-upper class American, for instance. Analyzing the two shows can shed some light on how the television space regarding women and their lives—including sexuality—has been altered over the years.

Keywords: media, women, sexuality, gender studies, media studies

Introduction

The Golden Girls (1985-1992) TV show premiered in 1985, leading the way for a new type of American situation comedy: one whose main characters were all adult and senior women.[8] The TV show, which represented a breath of fresh air for the American comedy panorama, was incredibly successful, with millions of viewers during the seven seasons that showed the adventures of Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, and Sophia. Other shows have taken up the baton since 1992: probably the most famous one has been *Sex in the City* (1998-2004) which also followed the lives of four friends with remarkably different personalities, as it happens in *The Golden Girls*, and the more recent *Girls* (2012-2017).

However, we had to wait until the production of *Grace and Frankie* (2015-present), created by and available on the platform *Netflix*, to watch a series entirely led by senior women—and men—. Thus, *Grace and Frankie* can be perceived as the natural follower of *The Golden Girls*. The show, which aired in 2015—exactly thirty years after the pilot of *The Golden Girls* was broadcasted for the first time—stars senior actresses Jane Fonda (currently 80) as Grace; and Lily Tomlin (currently 79) as Frankie. In the script, their respective husbands had been involved in a secret romantic relationship for years, until they decide to divorce their wives and start a new life as a married couple. Grace and Frankie, who did not particularly like each other, end up living together as roommates, exactly as *The Golden Girls* did.

Both TV shows (*The Golden Girls* and *Grace and Frankie*) deal with an immense variety of topics during the seasons: from marriage, divorce, and kids, to the idea of 'feeling old.' However, perhaps the matter that is most regarded—in terms of relevance for the storylines, for example—is their sexuality and sex lives—or the lack thereof—. *The Golden Girls* was a groundbreaking TV show, especially in terms of starting a conversation in *prime time* about senior women's sexuality—there is absolutely no doubt about it; however, *Grace and Frankie* not only lives up to the expectations but expands the sexuality horizon by

[8] When the pilot aired, three of the leading characters were in their sixties, while the youngest one was fifty-one years old.

introducing a whole plot about designing sexual toys for women with arthritis. Hence, both TV shows are similar and different enough to compare and analyze in terms of how they represent the sex lives and sexualities of their main characters.

Methodology

Cultural products can be analyzed from a myriad of different points of view. However, I believe that applying a post-feminist lens to the analysis of how women sexuality is displayed in a different—or similar—way in both shows is key to understand the change of paradigm that has happened during the thirty years that separate *The Golden Girls* from *Grace and Frankie*. The economic boom in the Western world during the decades of the 1990s and 2000s influenced every sphere of human life (Genz and Brabon 2018), including philosophy and cultural studies. Post-feminism is one of the theories that deciphers this new millennial re-articulation; therefore, its use is essential in order to conduct this analysis.

The main method that I will engage with in order to conduct this research is content analysis. This methodology—as any other, I will dare to say—is, to an extent, limited. This means that, although content analysis is a well-established method to research cultural products that can be understood as 'texts' (Macnamara 2005)—such as movies or TV shows—, it poses some challenges. To begin with, it has been argued that cultural products are "open to varied interpretations and, as such, analysis of them cannot be objective" (Macnamara 2). However, it has already been proved by numerous scholars that 'objectivity' is neither possible nor desirable in feminist research (Rich 1986); that the researcher comes with a cultural and social baggage that makes risible the idea that we can act as a blank page. Additionally, the very idea of the existence of a 'truth' that is out there, hidden between the tangled mess of society and culture, waiting until a know-it-all researcher comes and exposes it, has been heavily criticized by postmodernist scholars (Smith 1996). At the same time, it has been claimed numerous times that content analysis "is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make *valid* inferences from text" (Weber 9, emphasis added).

Thus, far from denying the existence of a social reality subjected to the possibility of being explained, what I propose is that a post-feminist interpretation and content analysis of *Grace and Frankie* and *The Golden Girls* is one of the possible theoretical frameworks that can be used. It is the one that I have chosen but there are many others: the same can be said of the chosen examples to illustrate my arguments; there are multiple but I have included the ones that I believe are more representative. *Golden Girls* aired from 1985 to 1992, meaning that it expanded over seven seasons and 180 episodes of thirty minutes. Examining every aspect that might be relevant for this paper proved to be virtually impossible, so I expect that the examples provided serve the purpose of guiding the reader through the analysis that I have conducted.

Post-Feminism: The "Bubble Culture" of the Twenty-First Century

Post-feminism is a relatively recent phenomenon and thus its definition can pose some challenges. According to Yvonne Tasker and Dianne Negra, post-feminism "broadly encompasses a set of assumptions, widely disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the 'pastness' of feminism" (1). Angela McRobbie argues that post-feminism can be understood as an active process that undermines the feminist goals that were obtained in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s in the Western world; and that it can be used as a lens to examine how "a number of intersecting but also conflicting currents" (255); are expressed in popular culture. In the words of Genz and Brabon, post-feminism is a "cultural, academic and political conundrum" (1), but also a fluid analysis category that is linked to the notion that feminism is somehow outdated or passé, no longer needed; and it is portrayed as such in mass media channels. In this sense, the fluidity and plasticity of the term allows its use to define a certain kind of neoliberal-plus-feminist ideology that permeates cultural products (e.g. media creations such as a TV show can be defined as post-

feminist), as well as a coherent theoretical framework which already counts with a vast scientific literature (see Tasker and Negra 2017, Gamble 2001, and McRobbie 1994, among many others).

One of the features that define the contemporaneous post-feminist Western culture is that the feminist movement is portrayed as either out of fashion, or unneeded because "we are all equal now" (Brodie 145)—at least, formally equal—. Therefore, although some feminist concerns or problems can appear in post-feminist media products—and in *Grace and Frankie,* they do—, they are never treated seriously or are disregarded as personal problems and not structural ones, because the prevalent idea is that now women can be anything they want, provided that they wish it hard enough (Goodkind 397).

Post-feminism is also intrinsically linked to the economic boom of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which involves a neoliberal consumer logic that fosters inherent market inequality, focuses on the individual rather than in the group—e.g. there is no such thing as society, in the famous words of Margaret Thatcher—and places in him/her the responsibility for the improvement of structural inequalities (Giroux 2002). Goodkind describes the crisscrossing of feminist thinking with this contemporaneous market logic as a "commercialized version of feminism that has resulted from the intersection of neoliberalism with feminist ideals" (397).

In a post-feminist society, every person is what she has made of herself. However, gender roles and stereotypes still apply: the celebrated subject within the post-feminist bubble is a prototypically Caucasian, middle/upper class woman who, while economically empowered, is nevertheless focused "on body management, discipline and self-surveillance under the guise of fashion, fitness and beauty regimes" (Genz and Brabon 9). The individual, then, becomes a perpetual consumer in search of the product of her choice, as the freedom—even the right—to consume is one of the core mantras of post-feminism (Genz and Brabon 6). In *Grace and Frankie,* the character portrayed by Jane Fonda, Grace Hanson, represents the post-feminist subject, whereas in *The Golden Girls,* Blanche is perhaps the only character that can slightly fit into the post-feminist model. This difference between the characters makes sense due to the different chronological broadcast of the two TV shows.

Far from being a feminist utopia, the post-feminist culture we are contemporaneously experimenting—inside and outside mass media channels—establishes very strict limits regarding female accomplishment in life. Women's achievements are still measured according to traditionally male standards: success is based on a career in 'male working environments' as well as including some female-only accomplishments such as taking part in "the celebration of surgical other disciplinary techniques that 'enable' (i.e., require) women to maintain a youthful appearance and attitude in later life" (Tasker and Negra 1-2).

Post-feminist cultural products, as it has been stated, either obviate feminism, mourn previous times—perceived as 'more feminist'—, or praise its apparent death (Tasker and Negra 2007). In the case of *The Golden Girls,* a TV series born in the 1980s, it can be perceived that the influence of the second wave of feminism was still recent in American television. If we place the birth of the second wave of American feminism in the 1960s, we can see that *The Golden Girls* may have benefited from feminist demands of a fair representation of women in society (Anderson and Stewart 596) and in media. In fact, *The Golden Girls*—besides the obvious feminist conquest of having an all-female leading cast—deals with topics which were key in the agenda of the second wave of American feminism, such as reproductive freedom or the inclusion of women in the labor market (Rosenfelt and Stacey 1987). However, the period of broadcasting of *The Golden Girls* coincides with the slow fading of the second wave of feminism and the start of post-feminism (Mann and Huffman 2005); it is in the friction between the unmet second wave demands and the critiques towards the movement of some prominent figures—such as Betty Friedan[9]—where post-

[9] In *The Second Stage,* Friedan attacks the supposedly second wave feminism outcome of women not taking adequate care of their families (1981)

feminism is born. However, the purpose of this work is not to judge whether the two TV shows were 'feminist enough' or not, but rather how the social demands of the time did permeate these television products to affect the display of the characters' sexualities. The period of time between the broadcasting of *The Golden Girls* and *Grace and Frankie* and the pertinent differences between the shows work as a perfect example of how the media portrayal of senior women has changed throughout the years.

In Grace and Frankie, feminism as a movement(s) is never mentioned; but a very particular form of feminism (indeed, a post-feminism) is embodied by all the female characters. The word 'feminism' is virtually absent from the characters' vocabulary whereas an 'empowerment' rhetoric is widely used by the female ones, especially by Grace's daughter Brianna, who represents the stereotypical successful business woman incapable of finding herself a man. However, post-feminism is more complex than just the junction of neoliberal consumer logic and a 'have-it-all' female persona—albeit this constitutes its very core—. By applying a post-feminist theoretical framework to any contemporaneous cultural product, as it is the case of *Grace and Frankie* and *The Golden Girls,* a "more complex relationship between culture, politics and feminism" (Tasker and Negra 1) can be unveiled.

However, post-feminist media products have been—and rightly so—accused of being a phenomenon created for and by the white middle/upper class (Tasker and Negra 3). Their lack of inclusion of women of color and of other political subjects from different backgrounds other than Western, Caucasian, and middle class is evident if we look at recent cultural products such as *Grace and Frankie* or other TV shows portraying 'empowered' women such as *Girls*. Nonetheless, in my opinion that does not invalidate the use of a post-feminist theoretical framework to analyze post-feminist products; but rather it helps to highlight the current lack of representation of minorities and people from working class backgrounds in mainstream media. Following Tasker and Negra, "[p]ost-feminism is white and middle class by default, anchored in consumption as a strategy (and leisure as a site) for the production of the self" (3). However, let us not forget that lack of representation is not a contemporaneous phenomenon; as the same critique may as well apply to *The Golden Girls*, whose entire cast is rigorously Caucasian.

Finally, I argue, a post-feminist logic that unveils the hidden neoliberal measures disguised as female agency and empowerment gives us tools that other theories lack, simultaneously serving as a way of highlighting the inherent self-objectification and commoditization of the post-feminist subject and the economic empowerment of previously impoverished individuals.[10]

From Blanche to Grace: Thirty Years of Senior Women on TV

Part of the unbelievable success of *The Golden Girls* relies in its replication of a psychological pattern of completeness. According to Kaler, each of the four leading characters of the show represents one of the four stages in a woman's life: virgin, spouse, mother, and wise woman (49). In this sense, all the characters, with their archetypical personalities, complete each other to create in the viewers' mind the idea of the 'whole woman' (Kaler 49): a combination of the four of them.

Grant and Hundley agree with Kaler and expand the definition of the four labels: the character of Dorothy—the mother, as stated by Kaler—would represent "masculine reasoning" (Grant and Hundley 108) as can be perceived in several features of the character such as her sensible judgment, as well as her taste in clothes and her profession. The respective jobs of the *Golden Girls* match their allegedly archetypical personalities and highlight their main feature; hence Dorothy works as a teacher; Rose, who undoubtedly performs the "metaphorical virginal innocence" (Grant and Hundley 108), works as a counselor. Blanche, who is the most open of the four women regarding her sexual life, and therefore would

[10] One should not mistake post-feminism for third and fourth-wave feminism: post-feminism could be considered as the merging of the 'third wave' claims with a neoliberal and consumer logic. While post-feminism claims that feminism is somehow outdated, the fourth wave is doing exactly the opposite, bringing feminism back to the agenda using new technologies such as social media. (Maclaran 2015; Munro 2003)

represent the "archetype of sensuality," (Grant and Hundley 108) works as an event organizer and sometimes volunteers in a museum as a curator. According to Kaler, the fact that Blanche works organizing social events and parties functions to "emphasize her 'society woman' status" (53). Sophia, who is the oldest character and Dorothy's mother, is already retired after what appears to be—as it is suggested in the TV show—a life of doing little jobs due to her mafia connections. She represents the "wise woman," the archetype for the "the wisdom of experience" (Grant and Hundley 124).

The division of the 'complete woman' in four prototypical characters helps the viewers, no matter their age, to identify with one or multiple of them; as well as effectively expanding the age spectrum of the target audience. However, the four characters' personalities go beyond their archetypical core into a revolutionary terrain. Sophia, for example, who is supposed to be around 87 years (her age varies during the series, from 87 to 85, so the audience is never sure of her real age) is bold and blunt since the beginning. In the pilot, when Blanche is ready to go out with a man she is seeing and her friends are praising her appearance, Sophia says:

> SOPHIA. Who are you?
> BLANCHE. It's me, Blanche.
> SOPHIA. You look like a prostitute.
> ROSE. Sophia, the things you say! She didn't mean that, Blanche.
> SOPHIA. Of course I mean it, look at her!

Dorothy, who is supposed to be the 'mother' of all of them, is extremely sarcastic throughout the series:

> DOROTHY. Go to sleep, sweetheart. Pray for brains.

is one of her most famous quotes. The same happens with Rose and Blanche, both personalities do not *only* conform to the 'virgin' and 'spouse' label. After all, *The Golden Girls* is a situation comedy and part of the humor lies in the four women breaking the boundaries of what a respectable behavior for senior women was. In the case of *Grace and Frankie*, the characters evolve during the seasons—three, up to present—but they do not so much break the boundaries of what is socially acceptable for older women as to see themselves involved in unusual situations.

Blanche, Dorothy, Rose, and Sophia live together out of economic necessity; they need to share an apartment—Blanche's house—because three of them are working in either part time or low-paid jobs. In this sense, the dire economic situation that they have to face as mature women is somehow attenuated by the reciprocal friendship and support that they receive from each other. When the four *Golden Girls* are presented to the audience they are all already friends living together. However, in *Grace and Frankie*, both leading characters dislike each other. The action is set in motion because their respective husbands have been having an affair for twenty years and decide to leave their wives and start a new life as a gay couple. In *Golden Girls*, the start of the series does not depend on men—because in the pilot their lives together as a group have already started, it is the viewer who is unfamiliar with the situation, not the characters to each other—. In this sense, both Grace and Frankie are presented—at least at the beginning—as passive individuals, subjected to the come and go of their husbands.

*Grace and Fran*kie—both the characters and the TV show—can be analyzed using a post-feminist theoretical framework, as it has been already argued. Of course, *The Golden Girls* does not fit so well in the post-feminist optic—because the show is located temporally prior or contemporaneous to the beginning of post-feminism—, but that is the reason why comparing it with *Grace and Frankie* can be so shocking, because the portrayal of senior women is radically different, yet familiar.

In this new Netflix situational comedy where Grace is the paradigm of the post-feminist subject—a cosmetics mogul, rich, engaged in beauty and fitness regimes—, Frankie has more in common with any of

the *Golden Girls* than she does, but the character still embodies post-feminist features: Grace is presented as permanently anxious and neurotic, taking Ambien on a daily basis, in addition to an unhealthy dose of vodka. Frankie, on the other hand, represents the spirit of the 'hippie Californian' (Bucholtz et al. 328). She is a yoga-lover, vegetarian artist without a steady job who is able to enjoy a superior and luxurious lifestyle because of her marriage to a successful lawyer, Sol. In this sense, Grace is far more financially independent than Frankie, due to the success of her long-life beauty company. However, Grace is perpetually worried about her appearance and her physique—which leads her to a severe restriction of her daily calorie intake—due to the necessity of conforming to the very strict rules of female hegemonic beauty (Genz and Brabon 9). Grace portrays the two main features of the post-feminist subject: the economic empowerment and the beauty enslavement.

Frankie, whose personality is supposed to be opposed to that of Grace's, is also a stereotypical product of this post-feminist culture that "enacts the possibility that women might *choose* to retreat from the public world of work" (Tasker and Negra 2, emphasis original). Only those that are privileged enough to be able to do so. However, she is the character that most resembles the behavior of Blanche in *The Golden Girls*: both had a very active romantic life without Grace's extreme preoccupation with her physique—indeed, one of the favorite activities of *The Golden Girls* was to eat cheesecake together; and obtaining great pleasure from eating sweets and fast food is also one of the characteristics of Frankie—.

In *Grace and Frankie*, the boundaries between the fictitious character of Grace and the real life actress Jane Fonda are somehow blurred, as in the show some people on the streets will recognize Grace as a beauty celebrity: just as it may happen in real life with Jane Fonda, universally known for her fitness videos. Grace—being the *persona*—of Fonda, maintains the preoccupation of the actress for keeping a slender body.

The husbands of Grace and Frankie, Robert and Sol, have a quasi-leading role in the show. In addition to provoking the start of the series with the breaking of their respective marriages, Sol and Robert function as a way of portraying a different kind of masculinity, as they come out as gay to their families. Although it can be argued that they represent the prototype of the old, white, affluent gay couple, one feature makes them atypical: their age. I would also argue that another one is their bisexuality. Their sexual orientation is, however, never described as such: Sol and Robert are suddenly 'gay'—despite having being married for decades and presumably having been in love with their wives for at least part of their marriage; in the case of Sol, also after their marriage—. The invisibility of men's bisexuality is not only an old phenomenon, but rather a common one (Steinman 400). The introduction of a same-sex couple in *Grace and Frankie* can hardly be considered revolutionary; in fact, in *The Golden Girls* the brother of Blanche is homosexual and the four women discuss during several episodes in season four his incoming wedding. Sophia, playing her part as the wise woman, finishes the discussion by saying:

> SOPHIA. Everyone wants someone to grow old with. And shouldn't everyone have that chance?

The homosexual couple does not have a recurrent role in the series but rather they are tertiary characters, so in this sense *Grace and Frankie* expands the portrayal of gay/bisexual sexuality in the mainstream media products, going beyond what *The Golden Girls* did.

In *The Golden Girls*, the four women work together to complete the image of the 'whole woman', as it has been stated. However, in *Grace and Frankie* the two couples are necessary to create this idea of 'wholeness,' as they constitute two sides of the same coin. The series starts with both couples in a heterosexual marriage, and the audience sees how both marriages are broken only to be soon rearranged: Sol and Robert leave their wives and start living together as a couple and Grace and Frankie move together to the beach house, as they find themselves homeless and without their respective husbands. The four characters are somehow stereotypical: Grace and Frankie have already been described; but Sol represents

the stereotype of the neurotic Jew (Krieger 387) and Robert of the stubborn, sturdy Irish (Grant and Holmes 111). However, both break the boundaries of these archetypes through their bisexuality—or homosexuality—. In the case of Grace and Frankie, their sexuality also plays a huge role in their empowerment as women; but other factors are also involved—such as an entrepreneurial spirit that culminates with the creation of their own company to sell vibrators—.

It can be argued then that the distinct personalities of the four *Golden Girls* are mixed in the characters of Grace, Frankie, Saul, and Robert.

Sex Toys and Arthritis: The Revolutionary Approach towards Female Pleasure

The Golden Girls representation of women's' sexuality was groundbreaking at the time. In the series, Blanche is undoubtedly the character that performs her sexuality in a more straightforward manner, however the other women also participate in the conversations about sex; so, sex is not only associated with one character but rather it is treated as a normal part of the women's sexuality. Blanche's character can be considered to be revolutionary at the moment, although we cannot forget that *The Golden Girls* is a TV show of the 1980s which means that it could have benefitted from the changes regarding love and sex life of the 1960s and 1970s (Allyn X). Blanche is also the one who cares more about her appearance and pays more attention to her beauty routines, but is not as obsessed as Grace is in *Grace and Frankie*, nor does she restrict her calorie intake. In this sense, she is less preoccupied with her body, or less reduced to her physical appearance.

In *The Golden Girls,* topics such as safe sex appear in several episodes: in 4x05, Blanche suggests that she, Dorothy and Rose should buy condoms as they are going on a cruise with their respective lovers. Despite their age and the consequent inability to get pregnant, the four women talk about STDs and especially about HIV. In another episode, Blanche is not afraid of looking like 'she wants it':

> BLANCHE. Sophia, by placing this pearl necklace between my bosoms, does it make me look like I'm a sex starved slut who is in need of a man to bed?
> SOPHIA. Yes.
> BLANCHE. Good, then pearl it is.

The use of a word such a 'slut' is, however, problematic. According to Armstrong et al., "[w]omen's participation in slut shaming is often viewed as internalized oppression: they apply disadvantageous sexual double standards established by men" (100). It is pertinent to ask if a man displayed the same behavior towards his desire of having sex—as Blanche is doing by putting a necklace that highlights her cleavage—it would mean that he looks like a 'sex starved slut who is in need of a man [or woman] to bed.' Of course, it can be argued that in this case Blanche is re-appropriating the term 'slut' and stripping if off its negative meaning. In fact, Blanche uses the world to define herself in more than one episode, as well as do her peers:

> BLANCHE. What was your first impression of me?
> ROSE. That you wore too much make-up and were a slut. But I was wrong. You don't wear too much make-up.

However, the ability to re-signify words can be a matter of class, as "[h]igh-status women employ slut discourse to assert class advantage, defining themselves as classy rather than trashy" (Armstrong et al. 100); as well as can be interpreted as internalized misogyny (Saakvitne and Pearlman 247). On another episode, one of Blanche's lines is "there is a fine line between having a good time and being a wanton slut. I know. My toe has been on that line." Being a 'wanton slut' is still used as something undesirable in the series, despite Blanche long list of sexual partners. According to Armstrong et al., the use of the slut

discourse "enables, rather than constrains, sexual experimentation for the high-status women whose definitions prevail in the dominant social scene. This is a form of sexual privilege" (100). So even though the portrayal of Blanche's sexuality can be considered as revolutionary and may have had a positive impact in the audience by treating a senior woman's sexual desire as something normal and glamorous, it still perpetuated the still-prevalent stigma women often have to face—and the consequent discrimination and loss of status—if they defy the rigid sexual standard that establishes that women are only allowed to engage in sexual activity when in a committed relationship (Armstrong et al. 101).

Despite Blanche's open attitude towards her sexual desire, her pleasure—as well as that of the other *Golden Girls*—often revolve around their affective relationships with men. In this sense, even if the display of her love life is seen as groundbreaking, it still can be criticized as being male-centered. Although the other characters' storylines usually involve some kind of dating, it is Blanche the one who has the biggest number of sexual encounters with men during the series. She is never afraid of showing her interest in men, usually with references about her ability to pleasure her sexual partners:

> DOROTHY. Is that all you care about? Sex and applause?
> BLANCHE. And sex. For which I usually get applause

However, for a show broadcasted in the mid-1980s, Dorothy, Rose, Sophia and Blanche lead the way towards a society that regards women's sexuality as a normal part of their lives. Although in the case of *Grace and Frankie* none of the characters is so explicitly passionate about intercourse, sex and sexuality are openly discussed, especially by Grace and Frankie themselves. In this sense, the show picks up the baton handed by *The Golden Girls* and further expands the notion of pleasure by including a storyline about both women creating a sexual toy for women who suffer from arthritis. This plot may be perceived as subversive, not only because of the age of the characters, but also because the reason for creating the vibrator is to heighten the pleasure of women during masturbation.

Grace and Frankie bring back to the debate the sexuality of senior women, and especially of those who suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, as the character of Grace does—indeed, in real life women are around twice as likely to have this condition than men are (Symmons et al. 735)—. The Ménage à Moi, as the sex toy is called, is ideated by both women thinking solely about the sexual pleasure of fellow senior women. In this sense, the age of the possible users of the vibrator is not only not a handicap, but something desirable—even though part of this desire comes from the fact that senior women may be a niche market—. The toy is designed thinking about the aging woman as it glows in the dark to help the eye find it easily, has bigger buttons than regular vibrators, it is ergonomic, and blends easily to help with its operation.

However, the creation of the Ménage à Moi can also be understood as a post-feminist outcome: it is designed for senior women as consumers that have the right and the choice to buy a sex toy that has been designed specifically for them. In this sense, senior women are being treated as any other societal group for whom products are created. However, if we take into account that post-feminism involves a certain pathologization of the aging body as well as rigid societal norms that define what is appropriate and decorous for the aging woman (Wearing 278), the creation of a vibrator for not only older women but also from those who suffer from a condition can be understood as a subversive—and even empowering—act. In this sense, the Ménage à Moi is a true post-feminist product within a post-feminist TV show: it involves both a certain empowerment that comes from buying a product and a 'neoliberalized' sexual empowerment, or a commercialized feminist orgasm.

Conclusions

The influence of *The Golden Girls* in *Grace and Frankie* is clear, especially in the character of Grace traces of Blanche can be seen. *The Golden Girls* portrayal of women's sexuality was groundbreaking at the time, and its incredible success proved that a sitcom that revolved around the lives of old women was something the public craved. However, there are still some problematic acts if we analyze the show from a feminist perspective, such as the use of the world 'slut' or the lack of visibility of people of color. The characters of *The Golden Girls* can also be considered middle to upper class, even if economic necessity put them in the same house, they still uphold several kinds of capital including social and body capital (Antoninetti and Garret 364). In this sense, the series already shows some post-feminist features, such as the omission of feminist concerns or of feminism itself in a show that clearly has benefitted from some of the demands in the agenda of the second wave of American feminism.

In the case of *Grace and Frankie*, the TV show is clearly a post-feminist product that also revolves around the life of two families who are obviously upper class. However, as it has been argued, the storyline about the creation of a sex toy for women with arthritis can have a positive impact in a society that tends to forget that older women deserve to have a healthy sexual life in their senior years. It also brings to mind topics that are not usually treated in mainstream media products such as conditions that affect senior people and especially women and their related problems. The idea of older women engaging in masturbation—indeed, the idea of women of any age pleasuring themselves—is not common in mainstream products. In this sense, *Grace and Frankie* takes up the baton from *The Golden Girls* and expands the horizon of senior women's sexuality, even if that includes the purchase of a product.

The relationship between feminism and neoliberalism is complex and sometimes the line between the economic empowerment of women and the commercialization of feminism (Goodkind 397) is blurred. While some positive aspects can be highlighted from *Grace and Frankie*, others are just as problematic of those of *The Golden Girls*, which proves that we still have a long way to go.

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University Language Students' Experience of Handwriting and Typing Assignments: Issues and Challenges

Abstract: While new technological developments and devices have transformed writing in several ways, little research has examined how learners experience handwriting and typing assignments and writing responses in the examinations in such cases. Basing the data source on in-depth interviews, the current study aims to examine Turkish university language students' experiences, viewpoints, difficulties and challenges with regard to typing and handwriting assignments and responses in the exams at a state university in Turkey. The findings show that while the majority of the participants preferred to handwrite assignments, they also acknowledged several benefits of typing on a computer such as checking grammar and spelling easily and the fast corrections. The findings also indicate that the participants tried to take necessary precautions to resist the distractions of the digital world while typing and that they did not want to type their responses during the exams, for it would require much more time and fast keyboard skills.

Keywords: handwriting, typing, digital literacy, writing, assignments

Introduction

New generations grow up with their electronic devices, and much of their informal learning also occurs through these devices, and they learn how to use the keyboard, a touch screen, and a mobile phone as they learn how to walk. Technology has become increasingly integrated into our daily life and has been changing the ways we live and use our skills (Kessler 2017). Writing, for example, is one of these skills which technology has affected profoundly. The advent of computer technology has contributed to the way people write in terms of handwriting and style in a variety of ways over the last few decades (Harralson 2013). The act of writing with a pencil or pen seems to have been replaced by a variety of technological tools, if not forgotten. People communicate through laptops, mobile phones, and tablets using the physical or virtual keyboards so much that they rarely feel the need to take a handwritten note. They either take photos of the notes they might need or type their notes on their note applications. Besides, the easy use of word processing software and the easy-share of these typed documents seem to decrease the need for handwriting. Technology has affected and changed how learners write to such an extent that it is discussed and suggested that students, when requested, should be allowed to type their answers via technological devices, rather than handwriting their responses to exam questions in the classes (Mogey et al. 2008). However, the study conducted by McCarroll and Fletcher (2017) has stressed the importance of the quality of handwriting suggesting that there is a close relationship between academic success in the subject area of writing and the quality of handwriting in addition to reading.

The introduction of new digital devices such as tablet PCs and smart phones and the accompanying word-processing software seem to be replacing writing by hand. This, in return, seems to lead today's children to start typing on a digital device or touching a screen first before they learn how to write and master handwriting (Mangen and Velay 2010). However, although most work is done by students on digital devices, in most educational contexts, they have to take examinations where they have to handwrite their

responses. Therefore, it might be useful to determine the main advantages and disadvantages of typing and handwriting assignments.

Several studies have examined the effects of handwriting and determined that handwriting has various advantages over typing. For example, Kiefer et al. (2015) compared the effects of handwriting and typing training on letter recognition, reading and writing performance of preschool children. The participants in one group were trained in writing eight letters using a pen on paper, while the ones in the other group practiced typing the same letters on a computer using a keyboard. The results of the study indicated that no significant differences were found between the scores obtained by the participants in each group. However, the results revealed that handwriting training led the students to perform better than the other students in several word reading and writing tasks. Similarly, but from a different perspective, Karavanidou (2017) stated that the main advantage of typing over handwriting, due to the developments in word-processing software, is that users can easily tackle spelling mistakes and editing processes, resulting in the faster production of words in addition to correct spelling and legible writing.

Handwriting is believed to help learners remember their notes easier compared to typewriting as handwriting allows more time to consider what learners write and revise it. However, typing through word-processor software provides learners with the opportunity to easily correct and revise what they have written and enhance the final product (Mogey and Hartley 2013). As also indicated by Mogey and Fluck (2015), the choice between typing on technological devices and handwriting most often depends on learners' needs such as practical reasons and habits as in the study conducted by Mogey et al. (2008) and aesthetical reasons (Farinosi et al. 2016), and each choice has several advantages or disadvantages over the other one. The study conducted by Farinosi, Lim, and Roll compared the essays on reading and writing practices by German, British, and Italian students and conducted qualitative content analysis to reveal the reasons and the effects of the participants' choice of medium (paper, keyboard, or screen) on their reading and writing practices. The results of the study indicated that there were no major differences among the three groups of students. It was also determined that while the majority of the participants preferred to handwrite for daily activities such personal letters and shopping lists, they also used technological devices to write more formal issues such as thesis writing and important papers. The results also indicated that the main advantage of typing on a computer or any electronic device was that they could benefit from immediate correction of mistakes provided by word-processing software and easy access to dictionaries in addition to easy editing and revising the paper.

However, several studies have also indicated that integrating technology into the classroom has distracting effects hindering learning. One distracting effect is on student writing, which is found to be deteriorating with the use of technology in terms of spelling when they have to handwrite and the use of formal words and another is the distraction caused by electronic devices (Spitzer 2014). Dahlström and Boström (2017) compared the effects of writing narrative texts in three different conditions: pen and paper, tablet, and tablet with access to speech synthesis. The participants included a class of fourth graders in Sweden. Based on the theoretical model, the Wheel of Writing, and the process analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics, the observations were subject to content analysis. The results of the study indicated that when the participants used the digital devices, their use of processes to describe action verbs increased, while they used more processes regarding feelings and verbal processes when they handwrote and that spelling, structure, and content were affected positively when the participants used digital resources.

Despite these studies, some of which indicate the major benefits of handwriting over typing and of typing over handwriting, several other studies did not determine any significant differences between handwriting and typing. Mogey et al. (2010), for example, aimed to explore the differences in scoring when students were given the choice to provide their responses in two formats: typing or handwriting. The participants included seventy first-year divinity students who were asked to take a mock examination in

one of these two formats. The responses were evaluated and scored by four markers. The results of the study indicated no significant differences in terms of scoring due to the format in which students had provided their responses by either typing or handwriting. However, it was determined that the participants typed more than they could handwrite, which was not associated with their typing speed. Regarding attitudes towards handwriting and typing, Mogey and Fluck (2015) aimed to determine and compare the attitudes and behaviors of seventy-two students at two universities located in the UK and in Australia regarding using computers in examinations where they were required to write essays. The results of the study indicated that although most students expressed confidence in typing as fast as they can handwrite, several concerns were voiced by the students such as typing ability and the reliability of the hardware and software. The results also revealed that the participants would need to feel comfortable as they would not want to suffer from hardware or software failure.

As the review of the aforementioned studies indicates, most of the studies were conducted in contexts where the participants were exposed to computer use in the classroom such as taking notes. However, to the best knowledge of the author, there are no studies conducted to determine the participants' views and experience in contexts where the use of technological devices is rare except for the use of lecture slides and presentations. The current study aims to examine the experiences and views of Turkish university students currently studying in a state university in Turkey on handwriting and typing assignments in addition to typing responses during exams. The participants of the study were senior undergraduate students in several departments. The study aims to answer the following question: What were the students' experiences, viewpoints, difficulties and challenges with regard to typing and handwriting assignments and responses in the exams?

Methodology

Research Design

The study is an interview-based study and benefited from qualitative data obtained through the participants' responses provided during semi-structured interviews. The aim of using in-depth interviews to conduct the current study was to understand the lived experience and views of the participants (Seidman 2006; Arksey and Kinight 1999) as well as the challenges linked to typing and handwriting assignments and responses in the exams. It was believed that as it was not possible, if not impossible, to obtain data by using other sources or methods on the participants' experiences, interviews were believed to determine the meaning that the participants would make of that experience and those challenges faced during typing and handwriting.

Participants

Potential informants from the seniors in the Department of Foreign Language Education at a state university were contacted via emails and announcements in the class to ask whether they would be willing to participate in the study. Of these students, thirty agreed to be interviewed regarding their experience and views on typing and handwriting assignments. Therefore, the participants of the study included thirty Turkish pre-service seniors studying English Language Teaching at a state university in Turkey. Of these participants, 25 were female, while 5 were male students. Their average age was 23.5, and they were all graduates of high schools in Turkey.

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews aimed to determine the participants' experience and views in addition to the challenges that they faced while typing and handwriting the assignments. The interviews took place in the researcher's office depending on the availability of both the researcher and each participant. The

interviews were conducted in the participants' mother tongue, which was Turkish. The interview sessions included questions that probed (i) their experience with typing and handwriting assignments, (ii) difficulties and challenges caused by typing and handwriting assignments, (iii) their preferences regarding how to prepare assignments, and finally (iv) their views on typing responses in the exams. However, since the interviews were semi-structured, based on the nature and the flow of the interview, the participants asked and were asked several other questions related to the aim and the scope of the current study. The following are the questions that were planned to be asked to the participants in advance:

Typing assignments

1. Do you type your assignments? How often do you type your assignments?
2. Do you think that typing assignments provides you with benefits? Can you name any?
3. Do you think that typing assignments leads to any challenges? Can you name any?

Handwriting assignments

1. Do you handwrite assignments? How often do you handwrite your assignments?
2. Do you think that handwriting assignments provides you with benefits? Can you name any?
3. Do you think that handwriting assignments includes any challenges? Can you name any?

Typing the responses to exam questions

1. Have you ever typed your responses to questions in an exam in the class?
2. If allowed, would you like to type your responses to the questions during exams? Why? Why not?

The data analysis included reading and re-reading the notes taken, summarizing the participants' main responses and views, grouping and categorizing these summaries in addition to assigning them to emerging themes and codes.

Procedure

Of all the potential participants, thirty were willing to participate in the study. These participants, who responded positively, were briefly informed about the aim and the scope of the study and asked to provide the dates and time suitable for them to be interviewed for two weeks. Depending on the schedule of the researcher, the interviews were conducted in his office.

The interviews were conducted in Turkish, and the participants were directed eight questions under three main headings: (i) typing assignments, (ii) handwriting assignments, and (iii) typing the responses to exam questions. However, due to the nature of the semi-structured format of the interviews, both the researcher and the participants were free to lead the conversation. In other words, the participants were also given the opportunity to raise other issues connected with the interview questions or the responses they provided. In the same vein, the researcher could also focus on and probe into the issue in detail raised by the participants, require further clarification or explanations depending on the responses, which enabled obtaining richer and substantive data in line with the aims of the study.

Results and Discussion

The findings based on the responses provided by the participants during the semi-structured interviews have been discussed under each theme and the corresponding codes. The themes with the corresponding codes were determined as: (i) typing assignments (benefits and challenges), (ii) handwriting assignments (benefits and challenges), and (iii) typing responses to exam questions (inability to type fast and technical issues). Moreover, several quotes were selected to better represent the participants' experience and views, and it is ensured that these quotes are the most representative of the findings of the current study (Table 1).

(i) Typing Assignments (Benefits and Challenges)

The interview transcripts showed that the majority of the participants (*n*=25) agreed that typing assignments provided them with several comforts. They stated that they could easily correct and revise the assignments in addition to the word-processing features such as spell-check. For example, one of the participants expressed his views as follows:

> The word-processing software that I used provided me with several features such as easy editing and revising the text and spellcheck. I could easily correct my mistakes and whenever I could not remember the correct spelling or the synonyms of several words, the software helped me by indicating several options. [Interviewee ID 12, Male].

Table 1
The themes and main codes that emerged during the semi-structured interviews

Theme	Code	Sample Response
Typing assignments	*benefits*	*While typing, I could easily correct any mistake. I mean spelling mistakes, mainly. Handwriting does not allow easy correction, or if you try to correct, one can easily understand that. Moreover, I can also use the dictionary functions of the word-processing features such as finding the synonyms.*
	challenges	*I often felt the urge to check my e-mails or Facebook messages while trying to type my assignments. I think it really affected my performance. I want to say that typing took a lot more time compared to writing using pen and paper. I also engaged with other tasks like watching videos.*
Handwriting assignments	*benefits*	*You can write your assignments whenever you want. You do not need to find a suitable place or deal with the charging problems as it happens with the electronic devices. I also believe that you can easily focus on what you want to say in your assignments.*
	challenges	*If your handwriting is not good and legible, that is the worst situation. Moreover, if you have to write your assignments in ink and make a mistake, you have no other option but to rewrite it from the beginning. It takes a lot of time to do.*
Typing responses to exam questions	*Inability to type fast*	*I do not think it is a good idea to type our answers using a laptop or any other electronic device because it will not be easy for many, including me, to type fast. I am not the person that can type fast. I can handwrite a lot more than I can type. So, I would not type. It would be an obstacle for me as I use two fingers while typing.*
	technical issues	*What if the computer crashes down when you are almost finished with your answers? Or if your computer turns itself off as you are out of battery. I think it would not be convenient to type during an exam as it will bring many other problems and issues to resolve.*

This finding is consistent with that of the studies conducted by Karavanidou (2017), Mogey and Hartley (2013), and Farinosi, Lim, and Roll (2016), indicating that one of the main advantages of typing assignments seems to be related to the features of word-processing software such as spellcheck and easy editing of the texts produced by the participants.

However, the participants believed that typing presented several major challenges to their learning in addition to the benefits of typing assignments. Most participants did not prefer to type when they were given the option. Several participants (n=5) added that as they had training on how to type using a keyboard using their ten fingers, they were able to write as much as they handwrite or faster. Accordingly, they preferred to type their assignments, and one of these participants expressed this as follows:

> I can type much faster than I handwrite as I had training on typing fast using ten fingers even without looking at the keyboard. This training was part of my high school curriculum, and I knew that in the future I would benefit from this skill. Typing fast allows me to submit my assignments on time and spare more time to other activities.

On the other hand, the majority of the participants (n=25) did not prefer to type their assignments as they could not type as much as they handwrite. This has been clearly expressed as follows:

> I cannot type as much as I handwrite. I mean, I can write many more words and sentences than I can type. I can only use a few fingers and it takes time to write the words since I also have to check the screen to see if I am writing correctly. I did not have any training in keyboard skills. Maybe because of that I do not want to type. [Interviewee ID 18, Female]

When the participants were asked further questions on this issue, it was determined that they could type using their two fingers, and most of the time they had to hunt for each letter, which appeared as the main obstacle for them. This finding is contrary to that of the study conducted by Mogey and Fluck (2015) as the current study indicated that the participants had difficulty in typing fast. This might be attributed to the fact that almost all the participants in the current study did not practice taking notes on their laptops or any other electronic devices, while in the other study the participants were used to taking notes on their laptops, which might affect their typing ability and their preference. Moreover, as indicated in the participants' responses, handwriting is more confined to short notes and personal correspondence; however, even these uses might often be done on mobile devices using various software such as *Facebook.*

Regarding the challenges of typing assignments, it was determined that the most stated one was to resist the distractions of the digital world while typing their assignments on their computer, which caused the writing process to take longer compared to handwriting or pen and paper writing. Half of the participants agreed that they also engaged with other tasks such as instant messaging and watching videos while trying to write and type their assignments. Several participants (*n*=6) explained that they disconnected their computer from the Internet while typing in order not to check their emails or respond to a friend on *Facebook*. One of the participants expressed that as follows:

> It was difficult for me to concentrate on the assignment that I was supposed to write as I felt the need to check Facebook messages or whether there were any new e-mails that arrived in my Inbox. I tried hard not to be distracted and sometimes I had to disconnect my laptop from the Internet. [Interviewee ID 24, Male]

Therefore, ten participants argued that handwriting could be one way to overcome these distractions, and often opted for the option to handwrite the assignment first and then type when required. This finding corroborates that of the study conducted by Spitzer (2014), which indicated that learners' attention was directed to other activities rather than writing the assignment itself.

(ii) Handwriting Assignments (Benefits and Challenges)

All the participants stated that they all had to type assignments in the courses that they took in the department and that the instructors required them to submit their assignments electronically or in print. However, when they were asked whether they would prefer to handwrite or type if they were given the opportunity to select, the responses indicated that a great majority (n=25) preferred handwriting assignments rather than typing them if given the opportunity to select due to several reasons, one of which is that they could focus more on the content and remember their notes easier. The participants explained that they could handwrite in a variety of environments such as on the bus or in a café without much caring about the requirements to do the same with a laptop or any other equipment. One of the participants underscored the importance of freedom regarding the time and place to work as follows:

> I can easily focus on what I write when I handwrite. I do not have to sit in front of a screen for a long time or to be worried about battery status. I can write my assignments whenever and wherever. Not worrying about the technical issues is a real comfort. All you need is just a pen and paper. [Interviewee ID 29, Female]

This finding is consistent with that of the study conducted by Mogey and Fluck (2015), which indicated that the real concern of the participants was the technical issues and that the participants should not worry about hardware or software failure while typing their responses or assignments. However, although handwriting is believed to offer several benefits, it is not without challenges, as indicated by the responses. Many participants (n=26, out of 30) indicated that it was their handwriting that was the main concern for them. In other words, good and legible handwriting cannot be easily achieved. Moreover, when the assignments are to be written in ink, corrections become a real concern for the participants. One of the participants expressed this issue as follows:

> Handwriting offers several benefits, but if you cannot write legibly, it is a real problem as lecturers also pay attention to the format. Moreover, when you write in ink, corrections might become a real torture as you might have to rewrite your assignment from the beginning even though you were writing the last line, which appears a real disaster. [Interviewee ID 30, Female]

(iii) Typing Responses to Exam Questions

The participants were also asked their decisions on typing responses to exam questions in the class. When asked whether they would like to benefit from typing their responses on their computers or any other suitable electronic device, a great majority of the participants (n=24) expressed that they would not like to do it in exams since it would take much more time compared to handwriting. One participant explained this as follows:

> I cannot type as much as I handwrite. So, I would not opt for typing. If we think that there are many other factors such as organization, spelling, and selection of words, it would not be reasonable to type as it would take much more time, at least for me. [Interviewee ID 29, Female]

Three of the participants expressed that they would like to type responses, for their handwriting was not legible. However, three participants stated that they would type responses to exam questions as they could type much faster than they handwrite as they had training in typing. One of these participants expressed this as follows:

> I think it would be a different experience to type responses to the exam questions if we do not consider technical issues such as computer crash or charging problem. I can type faster and easily edit, change, or even organize my responses without spending much time on making my handwriting look fine or legible or dealing with erasing some of my text.

However, it is also due to note that two of the five participants who stated that they preferred to type their assignments as they had proficiency in it did not want to type responses during examinations due to several technical issues and concerns also voiced by the other participants. In addition to the ability to type fast, the participants also voiced technical issues and concerns regarding typing during an examination. One of the participants pointed out her preference as follows by indicating the possible technical problems and the noise that might affect her performance:

> I haven't tried typing during an exam, and I do not think it is possible to do that in this university. There might be many technical problems, let alone the noise of typing on the keyboard. Think about that. While you are trying to think about what to write, you will have to bear the noise coming from the keyboards. Moreover, it would also take more time to write if you are not really good at typing. [Interviewee ID 6, Female]

In sum, based on the participants' responses regarding their experiences with typing and handwriting their assignments, it can be stated that both bring a mixture of advantages and disadvantages. One major disadvantage is that learners found it difficult to resist the distractions of what was offered to them while working on a computer. This might also show the sign of addiction to the Internet, for the responses also indicated that they frequently felt the need to check their emails and Facebook messages whenever they worked on their computer. Moreover, typing was determined to require much more time as most participants found it faster to handwrite their assignments and did not wish to type during examinations although a few participants would like to type responses as they had the ability to type fast. Moreover, typing also offered several advantages such as spellchecking and easy revision.

Implications

In some other educational contexts, writing with paper and pen might be quite common at university and predominates writing, especially assignments and handwriting might help learners remember and focus on content more compared to typing without any requirements such as fast keyboard skills and a suitable place to use a computer. However, this does not mean that learners should only be allowed to handwrite. It must be also acknowledged that typed assignments offer several advantages to lecturers, not just learners in that the digital documents can be easy to read and be checked fast and easily for plagiarism. However, both handwriting and typing should be offered to learners, helping them improve their digital literacy skills in addition to benefits that handwriting offers to them. Lecturers can assign assignments, several of which are to be handwritten and typed. In this way, the mixture of advantages and disadvantages can be equally shared among learners, and while encouraging learners to improve their digital literacy, it is also ensured that they also develop legible and fluent handwriting. Lecturers might also consider allowing students to type their responses during exams provided that they take necessary precautions against cheating.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to determine the experience and the views of university language education seniors regarding handwriting and typing assignments in addition to their views on typing responses during exams. The study was an interview-based study, and the data were collected through in-depth interviews. The main findings indicated that the great majority of the participants preferred to handwrite

assignments and responses to exam questions rather than typing assignments. However, several benefits of typing assignments were voiced such as spelling and grammar checking features. Moreover, the participants did not like the idea of typing responses during the exams, for it would require much more time and typing fast. It is due to note that the current study is limited in various aspects. First, as the study was based on the data obtained through semi-structured interviews, it needs to be triangulated through other sources of data such as observing. Moreover, the results and the discussions are framed within the participants' responses, which means that the data is solely based on the self-reported data. Finally, further research can also conduct experimental studies in which the participants can take examinations through technological devices and are asked to share their experiences and views.

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